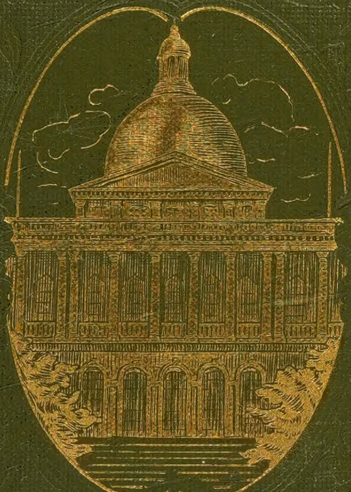

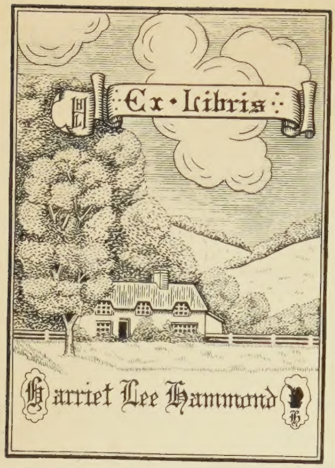
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DR. HOLMES'S BOSTON

Dr. Holmes starting on his Morning Walk in November, 1893

DR. HOLMES'S BOSTON

EDITED BY

CAROLINE TICKNOR

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE

Dr. Holmes was in truth the poet-laureate of Boston. He early won the laurels which were placed on his brow by his appreciative fellow-citizens, and these he wore triumphantly until the end. And in turn he crowned Boston with literary offerings such as no other citizen has bestowed in like measure. The spirit of New England has doubtless been presented in prose and verse by other sons and daughters, but no one else has given us so much of Boston from the Bostonian point of view.

Except for a brief interim Dr. Holmes passed all of his years in Boston, "tethered," it has been said, close to the State House, whose gilded dome he has immortalized in literature. All of his intimates lived within a few miles of him, and his useful activities were confined to his own community. Unlike so many prominent men of letters, he was in no way connected with diplomatic or political affairs; he held no public office, and his cheerful, useful career progressed in even, tranquil measures "in his own place." Seated in honor at the head of his Boston breakfast-table, the Autocrat looked out upon the broad expansive universe and in inimitable language discoursed upon its problems, pointed out, with a roguish finger, its eccentricities, touched gently upon its sorrows, and with his flow of wit and wisdom enlivened and instructed the minds and spirits of the ever-widening circle of his table companions.

Dr. Holmes's Boston is the Boston of the entire nineteenth century, barring its opening and closing decades, and in his varied disquisitions he has reflected its characteristics, changes, and gradual expansion. His Boston was not merely a place, it was also a very individual "state-of-mind," and the immortal Autocrat not only voiced that mental attitude, but also did much to influence its trend and shape its course. Holmes was, no doubt, to some extent, what Boston made him, and Boston to-day bears the vivid imprint left by the personality of him who christened it the "Hub."

"Surely this is the ideal civic bard," exclaimed Edmund Clarence Stedman, "who at the outset boasted of his town, —

> " The threefold hill shall be
> The home of art, the nurse of liberty, —

“ and who has celebrated her every effort, in peace or war, to make good the boast. He is an essential part of Boston, like the crier who becomes so identified with a court that it seems as if Justice must change quarters when he is gone. The Boston of Holmes, distinct as his own personality, certainly must go with him. Much will become new when old things pass away with the generation of a wit who made a jest that his State Hòuse was the hub of the solar system, and in his heart believed it. The time is ended when we can be so local; this civic faith was born before the age of steam, and cannot outlast, save as a tradition, the advent of electric motors and octuple sheets. Towns must lose their individuality, even as men, — who yearly differ less from one another. Yet the provincialism of Boston has been its charm, and its citizens, striving to be cosmopolitan, in time may repent the effacement of their birth-mark.”

The following compilation aims to present the “Boston of Holmes,” as set forth by himself. The many passages dealing with this his favorite topic have been gleaned from his entire works and have been fitted together in chronological order. Thus the Boston flavor, which permeates the Doctor’s work throughout, is now for the first time presented in concentrated form. His scattered reflections and picturesque descriptions, when pieced together, furnish an almost consecutive story of nineteenth-century Boston. And with this revelation of "Dr. Holmes's Boston" is bound up a characteristic picture of "Boston's Dr. Holmes," for, though it is at best a fragmentary piece of work, its autobiographical interest goes far toward proving the truth of the saying attributed to the wise Doctor, that "an autobiography is what a biography ought to be."

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DR. HOLMES STARTING ON HIS MORNING WALK IN NOVEMBER, 1893 . . . . *Frontispiece*

He is just leaving his house at 296 Beacon Street.

THE STATE-HOUSE DOME . . . . . *Title-Page*

"Boston State House is the hub of the solar system. You could n't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar." The State House was built by Charles Bulfinch, architect, in 1795–98. The dome was at first entirely of wood; it was covered with copper in 1802 and was first gilded in 1874. The present cupola, a reproduction of the original one, was built in 1897. The one shown in the picture was built in 1859.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

THE GAMBREL-ROOFED HOUSE 6

Dr. Holmes's birthplace in Cambridge. Built in 1730; torn down after the death of the Doctor's mother in 1862. It was General Ward's headquarters in the Revolution, and General Warren slept there before the Battle of Bunker Hill.

OLD LATIN SCHOOL, BEDFORD STREET, 1860 . . . 20

Built in 1844 and torn down in 1879. The famous teacher Francis Gardner was head-master here for many years, and here Phillips Brooks taught immediately after leaving college.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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From the collection of Mr. Bernard P. Verne.

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From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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The street-corner shown in the foreground is that of Boylston Street (left) and Clarendon Street (right). The site of the Coliseum is now occupied by Copley Square, Huntington Avenue, Trinity Church, etc.

From the collection of Mr. Bernard P. Verne.

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The view extends from the post office (then in process of construction) on the left to Summer Street on the right.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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The lion and unicorn of Colonial days have since been restored in place of the ornamental scrolls at the corners of the Old State House.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

PARK STREET CHURCH 100

Built in 1809. From the quality of the theology preached here, this came to be known as "Brimstone Corner."

From the collection of Mr. Bernard P. Verne.

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From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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The introduction of Boston's first city water service was celebrated here, October 25, 1848. The Soldiers' Monument, by Martin Milmore, was erected in 1877 in memory of the soldiers and sailors killed in the War for the Union.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

THE OLD CITY HALL, 1858 120

This was formerly the Court-House. It was fitted up as the City Hall in 1840–41. The present building was erected on the same site in 1862–65.

THE HANCOCK HOUSE, ON BEACON STREET NEXT TO THE STATE HOUSE 124

Built in 1737 by Thomas Hancock and later occupied by his nephew John Hancock. It was torn down in 1863.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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since the building of the New Old South Church in 1873–75, but it is maintained for lectures and the exhibition of antiquities by a fund raised to secure its preservation.

From the collection in the Boston Athenæum.

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The Museum was founded in 1870, and the building was completed in 1879. Sturgis & Brigham were the architects. It was torn down in 1911, the collections being removed to the new building farther out on Huntington Avenue, and the Copley Plaza Hotel was erected on the site.

From the collection in the Boston Athenæum.

Tremont Street Mall, now called Lafayette Mall, Boston Common 172

Showing the elms removed when the subway was built.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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It was over 72 feet high and $22\frac{1}{2}$ feet in circumference a foot from the ground, and was supposed to have antedated the founding of Boston. It blew down in a gale, February 15, 1876. A scion, now a sizable and vigorous tree, is growing on the site.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

The Tremont House, 1886 184

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This path, now known officially as Oliver Wendell Holmes Walk, runs from opposite Joy Street to the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets. The view is of the upper end, looking towards Beacon Street.

From the collection in the Boston Athenæum.

THE GARDINER GREENE HOUSE, PEMBERTON SQUARE 194

Built by William Vassall about 1758. In 1803 it came into the possession of Gardiner Greene, the wealthiest citizen of Boston in his day. It appears in Cooper's novel "Lionel Lincoln" as the house of Mrs. Lechmere. When it was torn down in 1835, the famous gingko, or ginkgo, tree which adorned its grounds was transplanted through the agency of Dr. Jacob Bigelow to the Joy Street end of the "Long Path" on Boston Common. The site of the house is now occupied by the Court-House.

From a painting by Pratt in 1833, now in the possession of Frederic Amory, Esq.

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Built in 1749–54. This was Dr. Holmes's place of worship. He occupied Pew 102 in the front centre of the south gallery.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

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Now called Christ Church. The view is from Hull Street and shows Copps Hill Burying-Ground on the left. The corner-stone was laid in 1723. It was in the belfry of this church that the lanterns were hung that gave the signal to Paul Revere on the night of the 18th of April, 1775. The church was restored in 1912 under the direction of Bishop William Lawrence.

From the collection in the Boston Public Library.

DR. HOLMES'S BOSTON

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND COLLEGE DAYS

1809–1830

From the first gleam of morning to the gray
Of peaceful evening, lo, a life unrolled!
In woven pictures all its changes told,
Its lights, its shadows, every flitting ray,
Till the long curtain, falling, dims the day,
Steals from the dial's disk the sunlight's gold,
And all the graven hours grow dark and cold
When late the glowing blazes of noontide lay.
Ah! the warm blood runs wild in youthful veins, —
Let me no longer play with painted fire;
New songs for new-born days! I would not tire
The listening ears that wait for fresher strains
In phrase new-moulded, new-forged rhythmic chains
With plaintive measures from a worn-out lyre.

DR. HOLMES'S BOSTON

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND COLLEGE DAYS

1809–1830

I KNOW that it is a hazardous experiment to address myself again to a public which in days long past has given me a generous welcome. But my readers have been, and are, a very faithful constituency. I think there are many among them who would rather listen to an old voice they are used to than to a new one of better quality, even if the "childish treble" should betray itself now and then in the tones of the over-tired organ. But there must be others, — I'm afraid many others, — who will exclaim, "He has had his day, and why can't he be content? We don't want any literary *revenants,* superfluous veterans, writers who have worn out their welcome and still insist on being attended to. Give us something fresh, something that belongs to our day and generation."

Alas, alas! my friend,— my young friend, for your hair is not yet whitened, — I am afraid you are too nearly right. . . . But suppose that a writer who has reached and passed the natural limit of serviceable years feels that he has some things which he would like to say, and which may have an interest for a limited class of readers, — is he not right in trying his powers and calmly taking the risk of failure?

I confess that there is something agreeable to me in renewing my relations with the reading public. Were it but a single appearance, it would give me a pleasant glimpse of the time when I was known as a frequent literary visitor. Many of my readers — if I can lure any from the pages of younger writers — will prove to be the children, or the grandchildren, of those whose acquaintance I made something more than a whole generation ago. I could depend on a kind welcome from my contemporaries, — my coevals. But where *are* those contemporaries? *Ay de mi!* as Carlyle used to exclaim, — "Ah, dear me," as our old women say, — I look round for them and see only their vacant places.

It will not do for us to boast about our young days and what they had to show. It is a great deal better to boast about what they did *not* show, and, strange as it may seem, there is a certain satisfaction in it. In these days of electric lighting, when you have only to touch a button and your parlor or bedroom is instantly flooded with light, it is a pleasure to revert to the era of the tinder-box, the flint and steel, and the brimstone match. It gives me an almost proud satisfaction to tell how we used, when those implements were not at hand, or not employed, to light our whale-oil lamp by blowing a live coal held against the wick, often swelling our cheeks and reddening our faces until we were on the verge of apoplexy. I love to tell of our stage-coach experiences, of our sailing-packet voyages, of the semi-barbarous destitution of all modern comforts and conveniences through which we bravely lived and came out the estimable personages you find us.

Think of it! All my boyish shooting was done with a flint-lock gun; the percussion lock came to me as one of those new-fangled notions people had just got hold of. We ancients can make a grand display of minus quantities in our reminiscences, and the figures look almost as well as if they had the plus sign before them.

In the last week of August used to fall Commencement day at Cambridge. I remember that week well, for something happened to me once at that time, namely, I was born.

[This notable event occurred upon the twenty-ninth of August, 1809, a year which was productive of many famous personages; Gladstone, Tennyson, Darwin, and Abraham Lincoln all first saw light within this memorable twelvemonth.

In the "old gambrel-roofed house," where Holmes was born, lurked many historic memories; there General Ward made his headquarters in Revolutionary days; its threshold was often crossed by Washington, and General Warren slept there prior to the battle of Bunker Hill. In this old homestead young Holmes dwelt until he reached years of maturity, when after his mother's death, it was torn down, leaving him to deplore its passing although he readily acknowledged it was "a case of justifiable *domicide*."]

Our old house is gone. I went all over it, into every chamber and closet, and found a ghost in each and all of them, to which I said good-by. I have not seen the level ground where it stood. Be thankful that you still keep your birthplace. This earth has a homeless look to me since mine has disappeared from its face.

I remember saying something, in one series of papers published long ago, about the experience

The Gambrel-roofed House

of dying out of a house, — of leaving it forever, as the soul dies out of the body. We may die out of many houses, but the house itself can die but once; and so real is the life of a house to one who has dwelt in it, more especially the life of the house which held him in dreamy infancy, in restless boyhood, in passionate youth, — so real, I say, is its life, that it seems as if something like a soul of it must outlast its perishing fame.

When the chick first emerges from the shell, the Creator's studio in which he was organized and shaped, it is a very little world with which he finds himself in relation. First the nest, then the hen-coop, by and by the barnyard with occasional predatory incursions into the neighbor's garden — and his little universe has reached its boundaries.

Just so with my experience of atmospheric existence. The low room of the old house — the little patch called the front yard — somewhat larger than the Turkish rug beneath my rocking-chair — the back yard with its wood-house, its carriage-house, its barn, and, let me not forget its pig-sty. These were the world of my earliest experiences. But from the western window of the room where I was born I could see the vast expanse of the Common, with the far-away "Washington Elm" as its central figure — the immeasurably distant hills of the horizon, and the infinite of space in which these gigantic figures were projected — all these, in unworded impressions — vague pictures swimming by each other as the eyes rolled without aim — threw the lights and shadows which floated by them. From this centre I felt my way into the creation beyond.

Although the spot of earth on which I came into being was not as largely endowed by nature as the birthplaces of other children, there was yet enough to kindle the fancy and imagination of a child of poetic tendencies. My birth-chamber and the places most familiar to my early years looked out to the west. My sunsets were as beautiful as any poet could ask for. Between my chamber and the sunsets were hills covered with trees, from amid which peeped out here and there the walls of a summer mansion, which my imagination turned into a palace. The elms, for which Cambridge was always famous, showed here and there upon the Common, not then disfigured by its hard and prosaic enclosures; and full before me waved the luxurient branches of the "Washington Elm," near which stood the handsome mansion then lived in by Professor Joseph McKean, now known as the Fay House, and the present seat of Radcliffe College.

Know old Cambridge? Hope you do. —
Born there? Don't say so! I was, too.
(Born in a house with a gambrel-roof, —
Standing still, if you must have proof.)

Nicest place that was ever seen,
Colleges red and Common green,
Sidewalks brownish, with trees between,
Sweetest spot beneath the skies,
When the canker-worms don't rise, —
When the dust, that sometimes flies
Into your mouth and ears and eyes,
In a quiet slumber lies,
Not in the shape of unbaked pies
Such as barefoot children prize.

A kind of harbor it seems to be,
Facing the flow of a boundless sea.
Rows of gray old Tutors stand
Ranged like rocks upon the sand;
Rolling beneath them, soft and green,
Breaks the tide of bright sixteen, —
One wave, two waves, three waves, four, —
Sliding up the sparkling floor:
Then it ebbs to flow no more,
Wandering off from shore to shore
With its freight of golden ore!

My boyhood had a number of real sensations. . . . An inspiring scene, which I witnessed many times in my early years, was the imposing triumphal entry of the Governor attended by a light-horse troop and a band of sturdy truckmen, on Commencement day. Vague recollections of a "muster," in which the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war" were represented to my young imagination. But my most vivid recollections are not associated with war but with peace. My earliest memory goes back to the Declaration of Peace, signalized to me by the illumination of the College in 1815. I remember well coming from the Dame school, throwing up my "jocky," as the other boys did, and shouting "Hooraw for Amiriky," looking at the blazing College windows, and revelling in the thought that I had permission to sit up as long as I wanted to. I lasted until eight o'clock, and then struck my colors, and was conveyed by my guardian and handmaiden from the brilliant spectacle to darkness and slumber.

The social habits of our people have undergone an immense change within the past half century, largely in consequence of the vast development in the means of intercourse between different neighborhoods.

Commencements, college gatherings of all kinds, church assemblages, school anniversaries, town centennials, — all possible occasions for getting crowds together are made the most of. " 'T is sixty years since," and a good many years over, — the time to which my memory extends. The great days of the year were, Election, — General Election on Wednesday, and Artillery Election on the Monday following, at which time lilacs were in bloom and 'lection buns were in order; Fourth of July, when strawberries were just going out; and Commencement, a grand time of feasting, fiddling, dancing, jollity, not to mention drunkenness and fighting, on the classic green at Cambridge. This was the season of melons and peaches. That is the way our boyhood chronicles events. It was odd that the literary festival should be turned into a Donnybrook fair, but so it was when I was a boy, and the tents and the shows and the crowds on the Common were to the promiscuous many, the essential parts of the great occasion. They had been so for generations, and it was only gradually that the Cambridge Saturnalia were replaced by the decencies and solemnities of the present sober anniversary.

Nowadays our celebrations smack of the Sunday school more than of the dancing-hall. The aroma of the punch-bowl has given way to the milder flavor of lemonade and the cooling virtues of ice-cream. A strawberry festival is about as far as the dissipation of our social gatherings ventures. There was much that was objectionable in those swearing, drinking, fighting times, but they had a certain excitement for us boys of the years when the century was in its teens, which comes back to us not without its fascinations. The days of total abstinence are a great improvement over those of unlicensed license, but there was a picturesque element about the rowdyism of our old Commencement days, which had a charm for the eye of boyhood.

They had not then the dainty things
That commons now afford,
But succotash and hominy
Were smoking on the board;
They did not rattle round in gigs,
Or dash in long-tailed blues,
But always on Commencement days
The tutors blacked their shoes.

God bless the ancient Puritans!
Their lot was hard enough
But honest hearts make iron arms,
And tender maids are tough;

So love and faith have formed and fed
Our true-born Yankee stuff,
And keep the kernel in the shell
The British found so rough!

The firing of the great guns at the Navy-yard is easily heard at the place where I was born and lived. "There is a ship of war come in," they used to say, when they heard them. Of course, I supposed that such vessels came in unexpectedly, after indefinite years of absence, — suddenly as falling stones; and that the great guns roared in their astonishment and delight at the sight of the old war-ship splitting the bay with her cutwater. Now, the sloop-of-war, the Wasp, Captain Blakely, after gloriously capturing the Reindeer and the Avon, had disappeared from the face of the ocean, and was supposed to be lost. But there was no proof of it, and, of course, for a time, hopes were entertained that she might be heard from. Long after the last real chance had utterly vanished, I pleased myself with the fond illusion that somewhere on the waste of waters she was still floating, and there were *years* during which I never heard the sound of the great gun booming inland from the Navy-yard without saying to myself, "The Wasp has come!" and almost thinking I could see her as she rolled in, crumpling the water before her, weather-beaten, barnacled, with shattered spars and threadbare canvas, welcomed by the shouts and tears of thousands. This was one of those dreams that I nursed and never told.

Do you know, dear reader, that I can remember the great September gale of 1815, as if it had blown yesterday? . . . The 23d of September, 1815. It was an awful blow. Began from the east, got round to the southeast, at last to the south, — we have had heavy blows from that quarter since then, as you suggest with your natural pleasant smile. It tore great elms up by the roots in the Boston Mall, in the row Mr. Paddock planted by the Granary Burial-ground. What was very suggestive, the English elms were the chief sufferers. The American ones, slenderer and more yielding, renewed the old experience of the willows by the side of the oaks.

The wind caught up the waters of the bay and of the river Charles, as mad shrews tear the hair from each other's heads. The salt spray was carried far inland, and left its crystals on the windows of farmhouses and villas. I have, besides more specific recollections, a general remaining impression of a mighty howling, roaring, banging, and crashing, with much running about, and loud screaming of orders for sudden taking in of all sail about the premises, and battening down of everything that could flap or fly away. The top-railing of our old gambrel-roofed house could not be taken in, and it tried an aeronautic excursion, as I remember. Dreadful stories came in from scared people that somehow managed to blow into harbor in our mansion. Barns had been unroofed, "chimbleys" overthrown, and there was an awful story of somebody taken up by the wind and slammed against something with the effect of staving in his ribs, — fearful to think of! It was hard travelling that day. . . . Boston escaped the calamity of having a high tide in conjunction with the violence of the gale, but Providence was half drowned, the flood rising twelve or fourteen feet above the high-water mark. . . . It is something to have seen or felt or heard the great September gale.

I'm not a chicken, I have seen
Full many a chill September,
And though I was a youngster then,
That gale I well remember;

The day before, my kite-string snapped,
And I, my kite pursuing,
The wind whisked off my palm-leaf hat;
For me two storms were brewing!

. . . . . .

It chanced to be our washing-day,
And all our things were drying;
The storm came roaring through the lines,
And set them all a flying;
I saw the shirts and petticoats
Go riding off like witches;
I lost, ah! bitterly I wept,—
I lost my Sunday breeches!

We used to receive into the family as "help," as they used to be called, young men and women from the country. From the men and boys, young persons of both sexes, I learned many phrases and habits of superstition, and peculiarities characteristic of our country people. They did not like to be called servants, did not show great alacrity in answering the bell, the peremptory summons of which had something of command in its tone, which did not agree with the free-born American.

Many expressions which have since died out were common in my young days,—"haowsen" for houses, "The haunt" for Nahant, "musicianers" for musicians. They had their Farmer's Almanac, their broad-sheets telling the story of how the "Constitootion" took the "Guerrier," and other naval combats.

They had their specific medicines, of which "hiry pikry" (hiera picra — sacred bitters) was a favorite. Some of the country customs were retained. "Husking" went on upon a small scale in the barn. The habits of parlor and kitchen with reference to alcoholic fluids were very free and hazy. In the parlor cider was drunk as freely as water; wine was always on the table at dinner, and not abstained from; and, in the kitchen, cordial, which was simply diluted and sweetened alcohol whatever was its flavor, was an occasional luxury; while "black strap," or rum and molasses, served in mowing time or a "raising." One of the greatest changes of the modern decades has been in the matter of heating and lighting. We depended on wood, which was brought from the country in loads upon sledges. This was often not kept long enough to burn easily, and the mockery of the green wood-fire was one of my recollections, the sap oozing from the ends and standing in puddles around the hearth.

I wonder whether the boys who live in Roxbury and Dorchester are ever moved to tears or filled with silent awe as they look upon the rocks and fragments of "puddingstone" abounding in those localities. I have my suspicions that these boys "heave a stone" or "fire a brickbat," composed of the conglomerate just mentioned, without any more tearful or philosophical contemplations than boys of less favored regions expend on the same performance. Yet a lump of puddingstone is a thing to look at, to think about, to study, to dream over, to go crazy with, to beat one's brains out against. Look at that pebble in it. From what cliff was it broken? On what beach rolled by the waves of the ocean? How and when inbedded in soft ooze, which itself became stone, and by-and-by was lifted into bald summits and steep cliffs, such as you may see on Meetinghouse-Hill any day — yes, and mark the scratches on their faces left when the boulder-carrying glaciers planed the surface of the continent with such rough tools that the storms have not worn the marks out of it with all the polishing of ever so many thousand years?

Or as you pass a roadside ditch or pool in springtime, take from it a bit of stick or straw which has lain undisturbed for a time. Some little worm-shaped masses of clear jelly containing specks are fastened to the stick: eggs of a small snail-like shell-fish. One of these specks magnified proves to be a crystalline sphere with an opaque mass in the centre. And while you are looking, the opaque mass begins to stir, and by-and-by slowly to turn upon its axis like a forming planet, — life beginning in the microcosm, as in the great worlds of the firmament, with the revolution that turns the surface in ceaseless round to the source of life and light.

A pebble and the spawn of a mollusk! Before you have solved their mysteries, this earth where you first saw them may be a vitrified slag, or a vapor diffused through planetary spaces. Mysteries are common enough, at any rate, whatever the boys in Roxbury and Dorchester think of "brickbats" and the spawn of creatures that live in roadside puddles.

At about ten years of age I began going to what we always called the "Port School," because it was kept at Cambridgeport, a mile from the College. This suburb was at that time thinly inhabited, and, being much of it marshy and imperfectly reclaimed, had a dreary look as compared with the thriving College settlement. The tenants of the many beautiful mansions that have sprung up along

Main Street, Harvard Street, and Broadway can hardly recall the time when, except the "Dana House" and the "Opposition House" and the "Clark House," these roads were almost all the way bordered by pastures until we reached the "stores" of Main Street, or were abreast of that forlorn "First Row" of Harvard Street. We called the boys of that locality "Port-chucks." They called us "Cambridge-chucks," but we got along very well together in the main. . . .

Sitting on the girls' benches, conspicuous among the school-girls of unlettered origin by that look which rarely fails to betray hereditary and congenital culture, was a young person very nearly my own age. She came with the reputation of being "smart," as we should have called it, clever as we say nowadays. This was Margaret Fuller, . . . her air to her schoolmates was marked by a certain stateliness and distance, as if she had other thoughts than theirs and was not of them. . . . A remarkable point about her was that long, flexile neck, arching and undulating in strange, sinuous movements, which one who loved her would compare to those of a swan, and one who loved her not, to those of the ophidian who tempted our common mother.

Old Latin School, Bedford Street, 1860

My first schoolmaster, William Biglow, was a man of peculiar character. He had been master of the Boston Latin School for a number of years, and seems to have found his pupils an unmanageable set in the early part of his reign. I can easily understand how he found difficulties in the management of a large collection of city boys. . . . I do not remember being the subject of any reproof or discipline at that school, although I do not doubt I deserved it, for I was an inveterate whisperer at every school I ever attended. I do remember that once as he passed me, he tapped me on the forehead with his pencil, and said he "could n't help it if I would do so well," a compliment I have never forgotten.

After being five years at Port School, the time drew near when I was to enter College. It seemed advisable to give me a year of higher training, and for that end some public school was thought to offer advantages. Phillips Academy at Andover was well known to us. . . . It was settled then that I should go to Phillips Academy, and preparations were made that I might join the school at the beginning of autumn.

In due time I took my departure in the old carriage, a little modernized from the pattern of my Lady Bountiful's, and we jogged soberly along, — kind parents and slightly nostalgic boy, — towards the seat of learning some twenty miles away. Up the old West Cambridge road, now North Avenue; past Davenport's tavern, with its sheltering tree and swinging sign; past the old powder-house, looking like a colossal conical ball set on end; past the old Tidd House, one of the finest ante-Revolutionary mansions; past Miss Swan's great square boarding-school, where the music of girlish laughter was ringing through the windy corridors; so on through Stoneham . . . Reading . . . Wilmington . . . so at last into the hallowed borders of the academic town.

My literary performances at Andover, if any reader who may have survived so far cares to know, included a translation from Virgil, out of which I remember this couplet, which had the inevitable cockney rhyme of beginners: —

"Thus by the power of Jove's imperial arm
The boiling ocean trembled into calm."

Also a discussion with Master Phineas Barnes on the case of Mary, Queen of Scots, which he treated argumentatively and I rhetorically and sentimentally. My sentences were praised and his conclusions adopted.

I went from the Academy to Harvard College.

We have stately old Colonial palaces in our ancient village, now a city, and a thriving one, — square-fronted edifices that stand back from the vulgar highway, with folded arms, as it were; social fortresses of the time when the twilight lustre of the throne reached as far as our half-cleared settlement, with a glacis before them in the shape of a long broad gravel-walk, so that in King George's time they looked as formidably to any but the silk-stocking gentry, as Gibraltar, or Ehrenbreitstein, to a visitor without the password. We forget all this in the kindly welcome they give us today; for some of them are still standing and doubly famous, as we all know.

The College plain would be nothing without its elms. As the long hair of woman is a glory to her, so are these green tresses that bank themselves against the sky in thick clustered masses the ornament and the pride of the classic green. You know the "Washington Elm," or if you do not, you had better rekindle your patriotism by reading the inscription, which tells you that under its shadow the great leader first drew his sword at the head of an American army. In a line with that you may see two others: the coral fan, as I always called it from its resemblance in form to that beautiful marine growth, and a third a little further along. I have heard it said that all three were planted at the same time, and that the difference in growth is due to the slope of the ground, — the Washington elm being lower than either of the others.

The soil of the University town is divided into patches of sandy and clayey ground. The Common and the College green, near which the old house stands, are on one of the sandy patches. Four curses are the local inheritance: droughts, dust, mud, and canker-worms. I cannot but think that all the characters of a region help to modify the children born in it. I am fond of making apologies for human nature, and I think I could find an excuse for myself if I, too, were dry and barren and muddy-witted and "cantankerous," — disposed to get my back up, like those other natives of the soil.

Like other boys in the country, I had my patch of ground, to which, in the spring time, I intrusted the seeds furnished me, with a confident trust in their resurrection and glorification in the better world of summer. But I soon found that my lines had fallen in a place where a vegetable growth had to run the gauntlet of as many foes and trials as a Christian pilgrim.

Beyond the garden was "the field," a vast domain of four acres or thereabout, by the measurement of after years, bordered to the north by a fathomless chasm, — the ditch the base-ball players of the present era jump over; on the east by unexplored territory; on the south by a barren enclosure, where the red sorrel proclaimed liberty and equality under its *drapeau rouge*, and succeeded in establishing a vegetable commune where all were alike, poor, mean, sour, and uninteresting; and on the west by the Common, not then disgraced by jealous enclosures, which make it look like a cattle-market. Beyond, as I looked round, were the Colleges, the meeting-house, the little square market-house, long vanished; the burial-ground where the dead Presidents stretched their weary bones under epitaphs stretched out at as full length as their subjects; the pretty church where the gouty Tories used to kneel on their hassocks; the district school-house, and hard by it Ma'am Hancock's cottage, never so called in those days, but rather "tenfooter"; then houses scattered near and far, open spaces, the shadowy elms, round hilltops in the distance and over all the great bowl of the sky. Mind you, this was the WORLD, as I first knew it; *terra veteribus cognita*, as Mr. Arrowsmith would have called it, if he had mapped out the universe of my infancy.

By and by the stony foot of the great University will plant itself on this whole territory, and the private recollections which cling so tenaciously and fondly to the place and its habitations will have died with those who cherished them.

Shall they ever live again in the memory of those who loved them here below? What is this life without the poor accidents which make it our own, and by which we identify ourselves? Ah me! I might like to be a winged chorister, but still it seems to me I should hardly be quite happy if I could not recall at will the Old House with the Long Entry, and the White Chamber (where I wrote the first verses that made me known, with a pencil, *stans pede in uno*, pretty nearly), and the Little Parlor and the Study, and the old books in uniforms as varied as those of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company used to be, if my memory serves me right, and the front yard with the Star-of-Bethlehems growing, flowerless, among the grass, and the dear faces to be seen no more there or anywhere on this earthly place of farewells.

> Go where the ancient pathway guides,
>   See where our sires laid down
> Their smiling babes, their cherished brides,
>   The patriarchs of the town;
> Hast thou a tear for buried love?
>   A sigh for transient power?
> All that a century left above,
>   Go, read it in an hour!

CHAPTER II

HABITS AND HABITATIONS

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar; —
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee; —
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea!

Oh better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
The lightning and the gale!

CHAPTER II

HABITS AND HABITATIONS

I, THEN, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Junior in Harvard University, am a plumeless biped of the height of exactly five feet three inches when standing in a pair of substantial boots made by Mr. Russell of this town, having eyes which I call blue, and hair which I do not know what to call, — in short, something such a looking kind of animal as I was at Andover, with the addition of two or three inches to my stature. Secondly with regard to my moral qualities, I am rather lazy than otherwise, and certainly do not study as hard as I ought to. I am not dissipated and I am not sedate, and when I last ascertained my college rank I stood in the humble situation of seventeenth scholar. . . . I am acquainted with a great many fellows who do not speak to each other. Still I find pleasant companions and a few good friends among these jarring elements. . . .

Wednesday — yesterday — was our Exhibition; on the whole it was very poor; sometimes fellows will get high parts who cannot sustain them with credit. Our Exhibition days, however, are very pleasant; in defiance of, or rather evading, the injunctions of the government, we contrive to have what they call "festive entertainments" and we call "blows." A fine body of academic militia, denominated the "Harvard Washington Corps," parades before the ladies in the afternoon, and there is eating and drinking and smoking and making merry.

If you ever come to Boston you will, of course, come to Cambridge. Our town has not much to boast of, excepting the College; it contains several thousand inhabitants, but there are three distinct villages. Our professors are several of them perfect originals.

[Two years later Holmes, the medical student, again discourses upon his position in another communication to his friend Phinehas Barnes.]

What a busy world we live in! The turmoil of those bustling around us, the ebb and flow, the dash and recoil, of the unceasing tide within us, — but I begin to talk fustian. I suppose now that whenever you take the trouble to think about me your fancy sketches a twofold picture. In the front ground stands myself, on one side sparkle the fountains of

Castalia and on the other stand open the portals of Nemesis (if that be the name of Law). My most excellent romancer, it is not so! I must announce to you the startling position that I have been a medical student for more than six months, and I am sitting with Wistar's Anatomy beneath my quiescent arm, with a stethoscope on my desk, and the blood-stained implements of my ungracious profession around me. . . . I know I might have made an indifferent lawyer, — I think I may make a tolerable physician, — I did not like the one, and I do like the other. And so you must know that for the last several months I have been quietly occupying a room in Boston, attending medical lectures, going to the Massachusetts Hospital, and slicing and slivering the carcasses of better men and women than I ever was myself or am like to be. It is a sin for a puny little fellow like me to mutilate one of your six-foot men as if he was a sheep, but *vive la science!* I must write a piece and call it records of the dissecting-room, so let me save all my pretty things, as plums for my pudding. If you would die fagged to death like a crow with the king birds after him, — be a school-master; if you would wax thin and savage, like a half-fed spider, — be a lawyer; if you would go off like an opium-eater in love with your starving delusion, —be a doctor.

To change the subject — I have just now a ruse in my head which I am in hopes to put into execution this summer. You must be aware, then, that there is a young lady, or what sounds sweeter, a girl, in Maine — I do not say where. Well, perhaps I am in love with her, and perhaps she is in love with me. At any rate I made a strapping fellow bite his nails, who had the impertinence to think she was pretty. I quizzed the caitiff in his remarks, anticipated his gallantries, and plagued him till he went about his business. Now I have a sneaking notion of coming down to Maine to see you, as I shall tell the folks, and take a cross-cut over to her log house. I can find it. She had so much the air of a human being while she was here that I have a curiosity to see her wild. Keep quiet. Do not write sixteen pages of cross-questions about her name and home and such sublunary things. When I am married you shall come and see us, and show her this letter. We shall breakfast at eight and dine at two precisely.

[In 1830, when Holmes was in the Law School, the frigate Constitution, then lying in the Charlestown

Navy Yard, was condemned by the Navy Department to be destroyed. Holmes read this in a newspaper and in a mood of indignation hastily penned the lines of "Old Ironsides" and sent them to the Boston "Advertiser." Fast and far the verses travelled through the press of the country, and when they reached Washington, they were circulated on printed handbills. The astonished Secretary made haste to retrace the step which he had taken in the interest of business, and the ship obtained its reprieve from the young law student, who thus achieved fame as a rising poet.

About the year 1836, one may catch a glimpse of the young doctor driving about the city in that chaise which, he asserted gayly, brought him more satisfaction than did the active practice of medicine: "In one of the clumsy great vehicles of that day, swung upon huge C springs, vibrating in every direction, the little gentleman used to appear advancing along the road, seeming at once in peril and a cause of peril, bouncing insecurely upon the seat, and driving always a mettlesome steed at an audacious speed."

On June 15, 1840, the year after he had begun to practise medicine, Dr. Holmes married Amelia Lee Jackson, of Boston, the third daughter of Hon. Charles Jackson, an associate Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth. Mrs. Holmes was an ideal wife, a delightful comrade, and a helpmate calculated to supply the wants, and, by her skilful management, smooth the path for her husband. Her executive ability enabled her to perform easily many tasks which would otherwise have rested upon the Doctor's shouders; she shielded him from bores and unnecessary interruptions and made his surroundings both cheerful and tranquil. She was kind, gentle, and tactful, and rose with strength and nobility to a great emergency such as she was forced to face when her eldest son was three times wounded in the Civil War. The children of this marriage were three. The eldest, Oliver Wendell, has since had an illustrious career; entering the Twentieth Massachusetts among the early volunteers, he was severely wounded in three engagements, but each time returned to the field. He became a lieutenant-colonel in the service. Later he studied law, won distinction by his writings, and has now been for many years an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The second child, a daughter named after her mother, married Mr. Tudor Sargent. She died in 1889. The third child, Edward Jackson, inherited much of his father's wit and humor but he also inherited the asthma with which Dr. Holmes was all his life afflicted. This undermined the son's rather feeble constitution so that he was much hampered in his practice of law; he died in 1884, and his mother survived him for four years, passing away in 1888.

At the time of his marriage Dr. Holmes bought a house at No. 8 Montgomery Place, subsequently Bosworth Street, which has long since vanished, and of which he wrote in 1885:]

Yesterday morning I passed through Montgomery Place, and found workmen tearing out the inside of No. 8, where we lived for eighteen years, and where all my children were born. Not a vestige is left to show where our old Cambridge house stood. . . . We must make ourselves new habitations . . . that is all: and carry our remembrances, associations, affections, all that makes home, under a new roof.

Little I ask; my wants are few;
  I only wish a hut of stone,
(A *very plain* brown stone will do,)
  That I may call my own; —
And close at hand is such a one,
In yonder street that fronts the sun.

. . . .

I care not much for gold or land; —
  Give me a mortgage here and there, —
Some good bank-stock, some note of hand,
  Or trifling railroad share, —
I only ask that Fortune send
A *little* more than I shall spend.

[From Montgomery Place, Dr. Holmes moved to 164 Charles Street, on the riverside, near the Cambridge bridge. This house commanded a fine view of the estuary of the Charles backed by the neighboring hills, and here the Doctor spent some happy years until the destroying hand of "progress" again approached his dwelling and the increasing business traffic on Charles Street forced him to migrate to a more tranquil spot, and he followed the river — back up Beacon Street — to his final home at 296. It was in 1870 that he took possession of his Beacon Street home, in which he breathed his last on October 7, 1894.

He was for many years an enthusiastic oarsman, and before the building-up of the Back Bay district, when there was an extensive estuary on which to embark, he was one of the first to launch his boat upon these waters. He was to be seen, when the weather permitted, making long excursions in his "long, sharp-pointed, black-cradle" pattern, and he has entertainingly described this pastime:]

For the past nine years, I have rowed about, during a good part of the summer, on fresh or salt water. My present fleet on the river Charles consists of three row-boats. 1 — A small flat-bottomed skiff of the shape of a flat-iron, kept mainly to lend to boys. 2 — A fancy dory for two pairs of sculls, in which I sometimes go out with my young folks. 3 — My own particular water-sulky, a "skeleton" or "shell" race-boat, twenty-two feet long, with huge outriggers, which boat I pull with ten foot sculls, — alone, of course, as it holds but one, and tips him out if he does n't mind what he is about. In this I glide around the Back Bay, down the stream, up the Charles to Cambridge and Watertown, up the Mystic, round the wharves, in the wake of steamboats, which leave a swell after them delightful to rock upon; I linger under the bridges, — those "caterpillar bridges," as my brother pro-

View from the State House looking West, showing the Back Bay before it was filled in

fessor so happily called them; rub against the black sides of wood-schooners; cool down under the overhanging stern of some tall Indiaman; stretch across to the Navy Yard, where the sentinel warns me off from the Ohio, — just as if I should hurt her by lying in her shadow; then strike out into the harbor, where the water gets clear and the air smells of the ocean, — till all at once I remember, that, if a west wind blows up of a sudden, I shall drift along past the islands, out of sight of the dear old State House, — plate, tumbler, knife and fork all waiting at home, but no chair drawn up at the table, — all the dear people waiting, waiting, waiting, while the boat is sliding, sliding, sliding into the great desert, were there is no tree and no fountain. As I don't want my wreck to be washed up on one of the beaches in company with devil's-aprons, bladder-weeds, dead horse-shoes, and bleached crab-shells, I turn about and flap my long narrow wings for home.

When the tide is running out swiftly, I have a splendid fight to get through the bridges, but always make it a rule to beat, — though I have been jammed up into pretty tight places at times, and was caught once between a vessel swinging round and the pier, until our bones (the boat's, that is) cracked as if we had been in the jaws of Behemoth. Then back to my moorings at the foot of the Common, off with the rowing-dress, dash under the green translucent wave, return to the garb of civilization, walk through my garden, take a look at the elms on the Common, and reaching my habitat, in consideration of my advanced period of life, indulge in the Elysian abandonment of a huge recumbent chair.

When I have established a pair of well-pronounced feathering-calluses on my thumbs, when I am in training so that I can do my fifteen miles at a stretch without coming to grief in any way, when I can perform my mile in eight minutes or a little more, then I feel as if I had old Time's head in chancery, and could give it to him at my leisure.

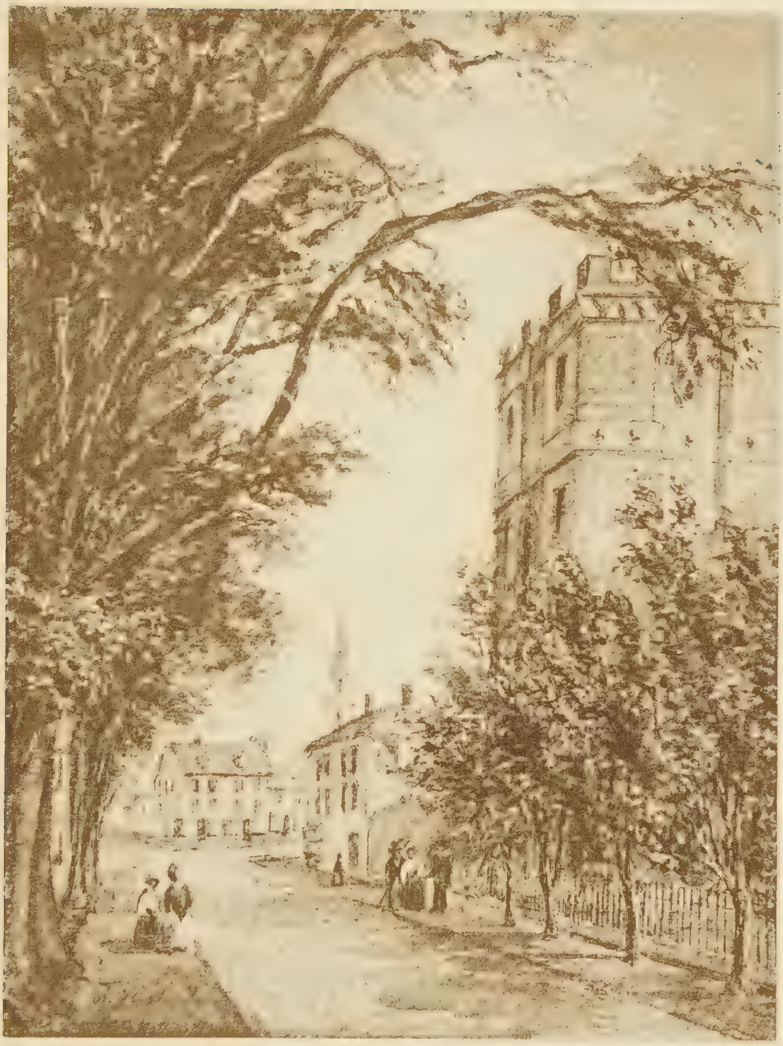
I do not deny the attraction of walking. I have bored this ancient city through and through in my daily travels, until I know it as an old inhabitant of Cheshire knows his cheese. Why, it was I who, in the course of these rambles, discovered that remarkable avenue called Myrtle Street, stretching in one long line from east of the Reservoir to a precipitous and rudely paved cliff which looks down on the grim abode of Science, and beyond it to the far hills; a promenade so delicious in its repose, so cheerfully varied with glimpses down the northern slope into busy Cambridge Street with its iron river of the horse-railroad, and wheeled barges gliding back and forward over it, — so delightfully closing at its western extremity in sunny courts and passages where I know peace, and beauty, and virtue, and serene old age must be perpetual tenants, — so alluring to all who desire to take their daily stroll, in the words of Dr. Watts —

> "Alike unknowing and unknown, —"

that nothing but a sense of duty would have prompted me to reveal the secret of its existence. I concede, therefore, that walking is an immeasurably fine invention, of which old age ought constantly to avail itself.

I dare not publicly name the rare joys, the infinite delights, that intoxicate me on some sweet June morning, when the river and bay are smooth as a sheet of beryl-green silk, and I run along ripping it up with my knife-edged shell of a boat, the rent closing after me like those wounds of angels which Milton tells of, but the seam still shining for many a long rood behind me. To lie still over the Flats, where the waters are shallow, and see the crabs crawling and the sculpins gliding busily and silently beneath the boat, — to rustle in through the long harsh grass that leads up some tranquil creek, — to take shelter from the sunbeams under one of the thousand-footed bridges, and look down its interminable colonnades, crusted with green and oozy growth, studded with minute barnacles, and belted with rings of dark mussels, while overhead streams and thunders that other river whose every wave is a human soul flowing to eternity as the river below flows to the ocean, lying there moored unseen, in loneliness so profound that the columns of Tadmor in the Desert could not seem more remote from life — the cool breeze on one's forehead, the stream whispering against the half-sunken pillars, — why should I tell of these things, that I should live to see my beloved haunts invaded and the waves blackened with boats as with a swarm of water-beetles? What a city of idiots we must be not to have covered this glorious bay with gondolas and wherries, as we have just learned to cover the ice in winter with skaters! I am satisfied that such a set of black-coated, stiff-jointed, soft-muscled, paste-

Summer Street in 1846, showing Trinity Church, with Park Street Steeple in the Distance



complexioned youth as we can boast in our Atlantic cities never before sprang from loins of Anglo-Saxon lineage.

West Boston Bridge, which I rake with my opera-glass from my window, I have been in the habit of crossing since the time when the tall masts of schooners and sloops at the Cambridge end of it used to frighten me, being a very little child. Year after year the boys and men, black and white, may be seen fishing over its rails, as hopefully as if the river were full of salmon. At certain seasons there will be now and then captured a youthful and inexperienced codfish, always, so far as I have observed, of quite trivial dimensions. The fame of the exploit has no sooner gone abroad, than the enthusiasts of the art come flocking down the river and cast their lines in side by side, until they look like a row of harp strings for number. . . . The spiny sculpin and the flabby, muddy flounder are the common rewards of the angler's toil. Do you happen to know these fish?

[Turning his back upon the river which he loves so well, Dr. Holmes climbs the hill and points out the early abiding places of several famous Bostonians.]

Emerson's birthplace and that of our other illustrious Bostonian, Benjamin Franklin, were within a kite-string's distance of each other. When the baby philosopher of the last century was carried from Milk Street through the narrow passage long known as Bishop's Alley, now Hawley Street, he came out in Summer Street, very nearly opposite the spot where, at the beginning of this century, stood the parsonage of the First Church, the home of the Reverend William Emerson, its pastor, and the birthplace of his son Ralph Waldo. The oblong quadrangle between Newbury, now Washington Street, Pond, now Bedford Street, Summer Street, and the open space called Church Green, where the New South Church was afterwards erected, is represented on Bonner's maps of 1772 and 1769 as an almost blank area, not crossed or penetrated by a single passageway.

Even so late as less than a half century ago this region was still a most attractive little *rus in urbe.* The sunny gardens of the late Judge Charles Jackson and the late Mr. S. P. Gardner opened their flowers and ripened their fruits in the places now occupied by great warehouses and other massive edifices. The most aristocratic pears, the "Saint Michael," the "Brown Bury," found their natural

Beacon Street in Dr. Holmes's Time

homes in these sheltered enclosures. The fine old mansion of Judge William Prescott looked out upon these gardens. Some of us can well remember the window of his son's, the historian's, study, the light from which used every evening to glimmer through the leaves of the pear-trees while the "Conquest of Mexico" was achieving itself under difficulties hardly less formidable than those encountered by Cortes. It was a charmed region in which Emerson first drew his breath.

Motley's father's family was at this time living in the house No. 7 Walnut Street, looking down Chestnut Street over the water to the western hills. Near by, at the corner of Beacon Street, was the residence of the family of the first mayor of Boston, and at a little distance from the opposite corner was the house of one of the fathers of New England manufacturing enterprise, a man of superior intellect, who built up a great name and fortune in our city. The children from these three homes naturally became playmates. Mr. Motley's house was a very hospitable one, and Lothrop and two of his young companions were allowed to carry out their schemes of amusement in the garden and the garret. If one with a prescient glance could have looked into that garret on some Saturday afternoon while our century was not far advanced in its second score of years, he might have found three boys in cloaks and doublets and plumed hats, heroes and bandits, enacting more or less impromptu melodramas. In one of the boys he would have seen the embryo dramatist of a nation's life history, John Lothrop Motley; in the second, a famous talker and wit who has spilled more good things on the wasteful air in conversation than would carry a "diner-out" through half a dozen London seasons . . . Thomas Gold Appleton. In the third, he would have recognized a champion of liberty known wherever that word is spoken, an orator whom to hear is to revive all the traditions of the grace, the address, the commanding sway of the silver-tongued eloquence of the most renowned speakers, — Wendell Phillips.

CHAPTER III

BOSTON IN WAR TIMES

We sing "Our Country's" song to-night
With saddened voice and eye;
Her banner droops in clouded light
Beneath the wintry sky.
We'll pledge her once in golden wine
Before her stars have set:
Though dim one reddening orb may shine,
We have a Country yet.

CHAPTER III

BOSTON IN WAR TIMES

["WAR TIMES" found Dr. Holmes an intense Unionist and patriot; he could not be induced to join working organizations, but he plied his pen ardently for his country's cause; he produced vivid prose, and stirring war lyrics; and his eldest son was among the first to enlist.

In 1861 he wrote Motley of conditions then prevailing in Boston:]

I AM thankful for your sake that you are out of this wretched country. There was never anything in our experience that gave any idea of it before. Not that we have any material suffering as yet. Our factories have been at work, and our dividends have been paid. Society — in Boston, at least — has been nearly as gay as usual. I had a few thousand dollars to raise to pay for my house in Charles Street, and sold my stocks for more than they cost me. We have had predictions, to be sure, that New England was to be left out in the cold if a new confederacy was formed, and that the grass was to grow in the streets of Boston. But prophets are at a terrible discount in these times, and in spite of their predictions Merrimac sells at $125. It is the terrible uncertainty of everything — most of all, the uncertainty of the opinion of men, I had almost said of principles. From the impracticable Abolitionist, as bent on total separation from the South as Carolina is on secession from the North, to a Hunker, or Submissionist, or whatever you choose to call the wretch who would sacrifice everything and beg the South's pardon for offending it, you find all shades of opinion in our streets.

[In reply to some criticisms concerning his failure to play the part of a literary reformer he exclaims:]

You blame me (kindly always) for what I do not do. I do not write poems or introduce passages stigmatizing war and slavery . . . one set of critics proscribe me for being serious and another for being gay, you will take neither the one hand nor the other with good grace, because I am not philo-melanic or miso-polemic enough to meet your standard.

I supposed that you, and such as you, would feel that I had taught a lesson of love, and would thank me for it. I supposed that you would say that I had tried in my humble way to adorn some of this common life that surrounds us, with colors borrowed

Colonnade Row, Tremont Street, opposite the Common, in 1860

from the imagination and the feelings, and thank me for my effort. I supposed you would recognize a glow of kindly feeling in every word of my poor lesson — even in its light touches of satire, which were only aimed at the excesses of well-meaning people.

I am sorry that I have failed in giving you pleasure because I have omitted two subjects on which you would have loved to hear my testimony. . . . But I must say, with regard to art and the management of my own powers, I think I shall in the main follow my own judgment and taste, rather than mould myself upon those of others. I shall follow the bent of my natural thoughts, which grow more grave and tender, or will do so as years creep over me. I shall not be afraid of gaiety more than of old, but I shall have more courage to be serious. Above all, I shall always be pleased rather to show what is beautiful in the life around me than to be pitching into giant vices, against which the acrid pulpit and the corrosive newspaper will always anticipate the gentle poet. Each of us has his theory of life, of art, of his own existence and relations. It is too much to ask of you to enter fully into mine, but be very well assured that it exists, — that it has its axioms, its intuitions, its connected beliefs as well as your own. Let me try to improve and please my fellow-men after my own fashion at present.

I go very little to Society and Club meetings. Some feel more of a call that way, others less; I among the least.

I hate the calling of meetings to order. I hate the nomination of "officers," always fearing lest I should be appointed Secretary. I hate being placed on committees. They are always having meetings at which half are absent and the rest late. I hate being officially and necessarily in the presence of men most of whom, either from excessive zeal in the good cause or from constitutional obtuseness, are incapable of being *bored*, which state is to me the most exhausting of all conditions, absorbing more of my life than any kind of active exertion I am capable of performing.

I am slow in apprehending parliamentary rules and usages, averse to the business details many persons revel in; and I am not in love with most of the actively stirring people whom one is apt to meet in all associations for doing good.

Some trees grow very tall and straight and large in the forest close to each other, but some must stand by themselves or they won't grow at all. Ever since I used to go to the "Institute of 1770" and hear Bob Rantoul call members to order, and to the "Euphradian" where our poor Loring used to be eloquent about Effie Deans, I have recognized an inaptitude, not to say ineptitude, belonging to me in connection with all such proceedings.

February 8, 1861, is said to have been the coldest day in this region for thirty-seven years. The thermometer fell to from 12° to 20° below zero in Boston, and from 20° to 30° in the neighboring towns. You may know it is cold when you see people clapping their hands to their ears, and hoisting their shoulders and running. I see them on the long West Boston Bridge every winter from my warm home at the river's edge in Boston. I am afraid with the wicked pleasure that Lucretius speaks of.

I know rather less of finance than you do of medicine. . . . I have always thought that if I had passed a year or two in a counting-room it would have gone far towards making a sensible man of me.

I only know there is a great split about making government paper legal tender, and if I could see Bill Gray five minutes just at this point, I could make out where the pinch is, and what *kept him awake* a week ago as I hear something did, thinking about it.

For myself, I do not profess to have any political wisdom. I read, I listen, I judge to the best of my ability. . . . If we have grown unmanly and degenerate in the north wind, I am willing that the sirocco should sweep us off from the soil. If the course of nature must be reversed for us, and the Southern Goths must march to the "beggarly land of ice" to overrun and recolonize us, I have nothing to object. But I have a most solid and robust faith in the sterling manhood of the North, in its endurance, its capacity for a military training, its plasticity for every need, in education, in political equality, in respect for man as man in peaceful development, which is our law, in distinction from aggressive colonization; in human qualities as against "bestial and diabolical ones" in the Lord as against the Devil.

If I never see peace and freedom in this land, I shall have faith that my children will see it. If they

Daniel Webster's House, at the corner of High and Summer Streets

do not live long enough to see it I believe their children will. The revelations we have had from the Old World have shed a new light for us on feudal barbarism. We know now where we have to look for sympathy. But oh! it would have done your heart good to see the processions of day before yesterday and to-day, the air all aflame with flags, the streets shaking with the tramp of long-stretched lines, and only one feeling showing itself, the passion of the first great uprising, only the full flower of which that was the opening bud.

God bless the Flag and its loyal defenders,
While its broad folds o'er the battle-field wave,
Till the dim star-wreath rekindle its splendors,
Washed from its stains in the blood of the brave!

They were talking in the cars to-day of Fremont's speech at the Tremont Temple last evening. His allusions to slavery — you know what they must have been — were received with an applause which they would never have gained a little while ago. Nay, I think a miscellaneous Boston audience would be more like to cheer any denunciation of slavery now than almost any other sentiment.

Do not think that the pluck or determination of the North has begun to yield. There never was such a universal enthusiasm for the defence of the Union and the trampling out of rebellion as at this perilous hour. . . . I won't say to you "be of good courage," because men of ideas are not put down by the accidents of a day or a year.

You remain an idealist, as all generous natures do and must. I sometimes think it is the only absolute line of division between men, — that which separates the men who hug the actual from those who stretch their arms to embrace the possible. I reduce my points of contact with the first class to a minimum.

You know better than I do the contrivances of that detested horde of mercenary partisans who would in a moment accept Jeff Davis, the slave-trade, and a Southern garrison in Boston, to get back their post-offices and their custom-houses. . . . The mean sympathizers with the traitors are about in the streets under many aspects. You can generally tell the more doubtful ones by the circumstance that they have a great budget of complaints against the government, that their memory is exceedingly retentive of every reverse and misfortune, and that they have the small end of their opera-glasses towards everything that looks encouraging. I do not think strange of this in old men; they wear their old opinions like their old clothes, until they are threadbare, and we need them as standards of past thought which we may reckon our progress by, as the ship wants her stationary log to tell her headway. But to meet *young* men who have breathed this American air without taking the contagious fever of liberty, whose hands lie as cold and flabby in yours as the fins of a fish, on the morning of a victory — this is the hardest thing to bear.

Oh, if the bullets would only go to the hearts that have no warm human blood in them! But the most generous of our youth is the price we must pay for the new heaven, and the new earth which are to be born of this fiery upheaval. I think one of the most trying things of a struggle like this is the painful revelation of the meanness which lies about us unsuspected.

War is a very old story, but it is a new one to this generation of Americans. Our own nearest relation in the ascending line remembers the Revolution well. How should she forget it? Did she not lose her doll, which was left behind when she was carried out of Boston, about that time growing uncomfortable by reason of cannon-balls dropping in from the neighboring heights at all hours, — in token of which see the tower of Brattle Street Church at this very day? War in her memory means '76. As for the brush of 1812, "we did not think much about that"; and everybody knows that the Mexican business did not concern us much, except in its political relations. No! war is a new thing to us who are not in the last quarter of their century.

The war passion burned like scattered coals of fire in the households of Revolutionary times; now it rushes all through the land like a flame over the prairie.

> "As the wild tempest wakes the slumbering sea,
> Thou only teachest all that man can be!"

We indulged in the above apostrophe to War in a Phi Beta Kappa poem of long ago. . . . Oftentimes, in paroxysms of peace and good will towards all mankind, we have felt twinges of conscience about the passage, especially when one of our orators showed us that a ship of war costs as much to build and to keep as a college, and that every port-hole we could stop would give us a new professor. Now we begin to think there was some meaning in our poor couplet. War has taught us, as nothing else could, what we can be and are. It has exalted our manhood and womanhood, and driven us all back upon our substantial human qualities, for a long time more or less kept out of sight by the spirit of commerce, the love of art, science, or literature, or other qualities not belonging to all of us as men and women.

Whatever miseries this war brings upon us, it is making us wiser, and we trust better. Wiser, for we are learning our weakness, our narrowness, our selfishness, our ignorance, in lessons of sorrow and shame. Better, because all that is noble in men and women is demanded by the time, and our people are rising to the standard the time calls for. For this is the question the hour is putting to each of us. Are you ready, if need be, to sacrifice all that you have and hope for in this world, that the generations to follow you may inherit a whole country whose natural condition shall be peace, and not a broken province which must live under the perpetual threat, if not in the constant presence, of war and all that war brings with it? If we are ready for this sacrifice, battles may be lost, but the campaign and its grand object must be won.

[After the battle of Antietam Dr. Holmes received a message that his son Captain Holmes was seriously wounded.]

In the dead of night which closed upon the bloody field of Antietam my household was startled from its slumbers by the loud summons of a telegraphic messenger. The air had been heavy all day with the rumors of battle, and thousands and tens of thousands had walked the streets with throbbing hearts, in dread anticipation of the tidings any hour might bring.

We rose hastily, and presently the messenger was admitted. I took the envelope from his hand, opened it, and read: —

HAGERSTOWN, 17th.

Capt. H. wounded shot through the neck thought not mortal at Keedysville.

[Dr. Holmes immediately set out upon a journey southward, and spent many days in vainly searching the hospitals and temporary shelters for his wounded son. In an article entitled "My Hunt after 'The Captain,'" he has set forth his quest in a memorable description of the conditions prevailing after the terrible battle.]

Was it possible that my Captain could be lying on straw in one of these places? Certainly it was pos-

West Street in 1860, looking towards Bedford Street

sible, but not probable; but as the lantern was held over each bed, it was with a kind of thrill that I looked upon the features it illuminated. Many times I started as some faint resemblance, — the shade of a young man's hair, the outline of his half-turned face, — recalled the presence I was in search of. The face would turn towards me, and the momentary illusion would pass away, but still the fancy clung to me. There was no figure huddled up on its rude couch, none stretched at the roadside, none toiling languidly along the dusty pike, none passing in car or in ambulance, that I did not scrutinize as if it might be that for which I was making my pilgrimage to the battle-field.

[Dr. Holmes missed the young Captain, who was travelling homeward by slow stages, and their meeting at last upon the train is characteristically described by him.]

The expected train came in so quietly that I was almost startled to see it on the track. Let us walk calmly through the cars, and look around us.

In the first car, on the fourth seat to the right, I saw my Captain; there I saw him, even my first-born, whom I had sought through many cities.

"How are you Boy?"

"How are you, Dad?"

Such are the proprieties of life, as they are observed among us Anglo-Saxons of the nineteenth century, decently disguising those natural impulses that made Joseph, the Prime Minister of Egypt, weep aloud so that the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard, — nay, which had once overcome his shaggy old uncle Esau so entirely that he fell on his brother's neck and cried like a baby in the presence of all the women.

On Monday morning, the twenty-ninth of September, we took the cars for home. . . .

Fling open the window-blinds of the chamber that looks out on the waters and towards the western sun! Let the joyous light shine in upon the pictures that hang upon its walls, and the shelves thick-set with the names of poets and philosophers and sacred teachers, in whose pages our boys learn that life is noble only when it is held cheap by the side of honor and of duty. Lay him on his bed, and let him sleep off his aches and weariness. So comes down another night over this household, unbroken by any messenger of evil tidings, — a night of peaceful rest and grateful thoughts; for this our son and brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.

Lord of all being! throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star;
Centre and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!

. . . .

Our midnight is thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are thine!

[On the 4th of July, 1863, Dr. Holmes delivered a stirring Oration before the Authorities of Boston. He closed this splendid address with the words:]

Citizens of Boston, sons and daughters of New England, men and women of the North, brothers and sisters in the bond of American Union, you have among you the scarred and wasted soldiers who have shed their blood for your temporal salvation. They bore your nation's emblems bravely through the fire and smoke of the battle-field; nay, their own bodies are starred with bullet-wounds and striped with sabre-cuts, as if to mark them as belonging to their country until their dust becomes a portion of the soil which they defended. In every Northern graveyard slumber the victims of this destroying struggle. Many whom you remember playing as children amidst the clover-blossoms of our Northern fields, sleep under nameless mounds with strange Southern wild-flowers blooming over them. By those wounds of living heroes, by those graves of fallen martyrs, by the hopes of your children yet unborn, and the claims of your children's children yet unborn, in the name of outraged honor, in the interest of violated sovereignty, for the life of an imperilled nation, for the sake of men everywhere and of our common humanity, for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom on earth, your country calls upon you to stand by her through good report and through evil report, in triumph and in defeat, until she emerges from the great war of Western civilization, Queen of the broad continent, Arbitress in the councils of earth's emancipated peoples; until the flag that fell from the wall of Fort Sumter floats again inviolate, supreme, over all her ancient inheritance, every fortress, every capital, every ship, and this warring land is once more a United Nation!

Flag of the heroes who left us their glory,
  Borne through their battle-fields' thunder and flame,
Blazoned in song and illumined in story,
  Wave o'er us all who inherit their fame!
    Up with our banner bright,
    Sprinkled with starry light,

Spread its fair emblems from mountain to shore,
  While through the sounding sky
  Loud rings the Nation's cry, —
UNION AND LIBERTY! ONE EVERMORE!

CHAPTER IV

THE COLISEUM AND THE BOSTON FIRE

1869–1872

(Sung at the "Jubilee," June 15, 1869, to the music of Keller's "American Hymn.")

ANGEL of Peace, thou hast wandered too long!
  Spread thy white wings to the sunshine of love!
Come while our voices are blended in song, —
  Fly to our ark like the storm-beaten dove! —
Fly to our ark on the wings of the dove, —
  Speed o'er the far-sounding billows of song,
Crowned with thine olive-leaf garland of love, —
  Angel of Peace, thou hast waited too long!

CHAPTER IV

THE COLISEUM AND THE BOSTON FIRE

1869-1872

[The great "Peace Jubilee" of 1869 was an epoch-making occurrence in Boston. It was pronounced by Dr. Holmes: "a mighty success"; "a sensation of a lifetime"; he wrote of it to Motley in glowing terms.]

We have had the Coliseum fever, and happily recovered. It was a grand affair, I assure you. I doubt if forty thousand people were ever seen before under one unbroken continuity of roof, in a single honest parallelogram. I will give you its dimensions, as compared with the Coliseum at Rome, — which last building had *velaria*, very probably, for emperors, ambassadors, and such, but had no proper roof. The audience was truly a wonderful sight, and the vast orchestra and chorus, though not deafening, as many expected, was almost oceanic in the volume of its surges and billows. I wrote a hymn for it which Amory told me, two days ago, I had not been praised enough for.

[At this same period he describes the new statue of Washington which he suggests needs to be turned about in order to face the city of Boston.]

We have got a grand new equestrian statue of George Washington, "first in war," etc., in the Public Garden. It reminds me of Rauch's statue of Frederic at Berlin, which I never saw, except in a glass stereograph — almost as good, however, as the statue itself. It faces down Commonwealth Avenue, as if he were riding out of Boston. I wonder we have not had an epigram, in some New York paper, to the effect that he is turning his horse's tail to us. They can turn it about, however, as they have done with Everett's. I suppose you [John Lothrop Motley] will be in bronze one of these days, — but I hope they will make you face Boston. This new and first equestrian statue we have seen here is generally admired. I think it is admirable in its effect, and I have not heard any but favorable criticisms so far. So you see, what with her Coliseum, and its thousand instruments and ten thousand singers, and its "man on horseback" (what a wonderfully picturesque generalization that was of Caleb Cushing's), and its two members of the Cabinet and Minister to England, our little town of Boston feels as good as any place of its size, to say nothing of bigger ones.

[When the friends of the rival claimants of the dis-

The Coliseum of the Peace Jubilee of 1869

covery of anæsthesia were proposing monuments for each, Holmes suggested that all should unite in erecting a single memorial, with a central group symbolizing painless surgery, a statue of Jackson on one side, a statue of Morton on the other and the inscription beneath: "To E (i) ther."]

I am going to send you my Halleck poem . . . and one or two other trifles. They will have a home flavor, I know, and you will get a whiff of Boston and Cambridge associations out of them, if nothing else, — just as Mr. Howells told me, coming out in the cars, yesterday, that the smell of the Back Bay salt water brought back Venice to him.

[The Humboldt Centennial celebration, which took place on September 14, 1869, of which Holmes wrote, was a feature of importance in Boston.]

September, 1868.

This last week we had a Humboldt celebration, or rather two, in Boston. One in which Agassiz was the orator, the other in which a German — Heinzel by name — was speaker. Agassiz did himself credit by a succinct account of Humboldt's life and labors, and interesting anecdotes of his personal relations with him. He was in great trouble all the time. Curious hint for public speakers who use glasses. I sat next to Charles Sumner. "Agassiz has made a mistake," he said; "he has eye-glasses; he ought to have spectacles. In three or four minutes his skin will get moist and they will slip and plague him." They did not in "three or four minutes," but in the last part of his address they gave him a good deal of trouble keeping one hand busy all the time to replace them as they slid down his nose. Remember this if you have occasion to speak an hour or two before an audience in a warm room. Of course I wrote a poem, which I had the wonderful sense to positively refuse delivering in Music Hall after the long Address of Agassiz, but read at the soirée afterwards. I thought well of it, as I am apt to, and others liked it.

His was no taper lit in cloistered cage,
  Its glimmer borrowed from the grove or porch;
He read the record of the planet's page
  By Etna's glare and Cotopaxi's torch.

He heard the voices of the pathless woods;
  On the salt steppes he saw the starlight shine;
He scaled the mountain's windy solitudes,
  And trod the galleries of the breathless mine.

. . . .

For God's new truth he claimed the kingly robe
  That priestly shoulders counted all their own,
Unrolled the gospel of the storied globe
  And led young Science to her empty throne.

Longfellow has got home, not looking younger certainly, but luminous with gentle graces as always. . . . Walking on the bridge two or three weeks ago, I met a barouche with Miss G—— and a portly mediæval gentleman at her side. I thought it was a ghost, almost, when the barouche stopped and out jumped Tom Appleton in the flesh, and plenty of it, as aforetime . We embraced — or rather he embraced me and I partially spanned his goodly circumference. He has been twice here — the last time he took tea and stayed till near eleven, pouring out all the time such a torrent of talk, witty, entertaining, audacious, ingenious, sometimes extravagant, but fringed always with pleasing fancies as deep as the border of a Queen's cashmere, that my mind came out of it as my body would out of a Turkish bath — every joint snapped and its hard epidermis taken clean off in that four hours' immersion.

So you see I have only told you of small local and personal matters, not so well as a lively woman would have done, but as they came up to my mind. I read somewhere lately a letter of a great personage then abroad — I think it was old John Adams — in which he begs for a letter full of trifling home-matters. He gets enough that strains him to read, and he wants undress talk. I can tell you nothing of the large world you will not get better from other correspondents, but I can talk to you of places and persons and topics of limited interest which will perhaps give you five minutes of Boston, and be as refreshing as a yawn and stretch after being fixed an hour in one position.

April, 1870.

I have been well enough of late, and went to a dinner-party at Mrs. ——'s yesterday, and a kind of soirée she had after it. This good lady (who is a distant relation of Mrs. Leo Hunter) had bagged Mr. Fechter, who has been turning the heads of the Boston women and girls with his Hamlets and Claude Melnottes. A pleasant, intelligent man, — but Boston furores are funny. The place is just of the right size for æsthetic endemics, and they spare neither age nor sex — among the women, that is, for we have man-women and woman-women here, you know. It reminds me of the time we had when Jefferson was here, but Fechter is feted off the stage as much as he is applauded on it. I have only seen him in Hamlet, in which he interested rather than overwhelmed me. But his talk about Rachel and the rest with whom he has played so much was mighty pleasant.

December, 1871.

At this moment, as I write, a flock of a hundred or more wild ducks are swimming about and diving in a little pool in the midst of the ice, for the river has just frozen over again, and the thermometer was at zero yesterday. I think you would call my library a pleasant room, even after all the fine residences you have seen. I do not think the two famous Claudes of Longford Castle, with the best picture Turner ever painted between them, would pay me for my three windows which look over the estuary of Charles River. But you know I have the faculty of being pleased with everything that is mine.

Through my north window, in the wintry weather, —
  My airy oriel on the river shore, —
I watch the sea-fowl as they flock together
  Where late the boatman flashed his dripping oar.

. . . .

I see the solemn gulls in council sitting
  On some broad ice-floe pondering long and late,
While overhead the home-bound ducks are flitting,
  And leave the tardy concave in debate.

. . . .

How often gazing where a bird reposes,
  Rocked on the wavelets, dripping with the tide,
I lose myself in strange metempsychosis
  And float a sea-fowl at a sea-fowl's side.

. . . .

A voice recalls me. — From my window turning
  I find myself a plumeless biped still;
No beak, no claws, so sign of wings discerning,
  In fact with nothing bird-like but my quill.

[At this time, 1870, the accession of Harvard' s new president was a matter of much interest.]

Our new President Eliot has turned the whole University over like a flapjack. There never was such a *bouleversement* as that in our Medical Faculty. The Corporation has taken the whole management out of our hands and changed everything. We are paid salaries, which I rather like, though I doubt if we gain in pocket by it. We have, partly in consequence of outside pressure, remodelled our whole course of instruction. Consequently we have a smaller class, but better students, each of whom pays more than under the old plan of management.

It is so curious to see a young man like Eliot, with an organizing brain, a firm will, a grave, calm, dignified presence, taking the ribbons of our classical coach and six, feeling the horses' mouths, putting a check on this one's capers and touching that one with the lash, — turning up everywhere, in every Faculty (I belong to three), on every public occasion at every dinner *orné*, and taking it all as naturally as if he had been born President. In the mean time Yale has chosen a Connecticut country minister, *æt.* 60, as her President, and the experiment of liberal culture with youth at the helm *versus* orthodox repression with a graybeard Palinurus is going on in a way that it is impossible to look at without interest in seeing how the experiment will turn out.

I suppose E—— has told you all about the Grand Duke's visit and the stir it made in our little city. You are so used to great folks that a Grand Duke is not more to you than a Giant or a Dwarf is to Barnum; but we had not had a sensation for some time, and this splendid young man — for he is a superb specimen — produced great effect. I suppose you get the Boston papers sometimes and read what your fellow-citizens are doing. The dinner the gentlemen (gave) was a handsome one — *thirty-five* dollars a plate ought to pay for what the Californians call a "square meal." Speeches and a poem, of course — blush for me! — the whole affair was a success, with one or two fiascos.

[Holmes wrote to his friend Motley a graphic description of the great Boston fire of 1872.]

The recollection of the Great Fire will always be associated with a kindly thought of yourself in my memory. For on Saturday, the 9th of November, your sister Mrs. S. Rodman, sent me a package of little Dutch story-books, which you had been so good as to procure for me. You have no idea with what childlike, or if you will childish, interest I looked at those little story-books. I was sitting in my library, my wife opposite, somewhere near nine o'clock, perhaps, when I heard the fire-bells and left the Dutch picture-books, which I was very busy with (trying to make out the stories with the aid of the pictures, which was often quite easy), and went to the north window. Nothing there. We see a good many fires in the northern hemisphere, which our windows command, and always look, when we hear an alarm, towards Charlestown, East Cambridge, Cambridge, and the towns beyond. Seeing nothing in that direction I went to the windows on Beacon Street, and looking out saw a column of light which I thought might come from the neighborhood of the corner of Boylston and Tremont Streets, where stands one of the finest edifices in Boston, the "Hotel Boylston," put up by Charles Francis Adams. The fire looked so formidable, I went out, thinking I would go to Commonwealth Avenue to get a clear view of it. As I went in that direction I soon found I was approaching a great conflagration. There was no getting very near the fire; but that night and the next morning I saw it dissolving the great high buildings, which seemed to melt away in it. My son Wendell made a remark which I found quite true, that great walls would tumble and yet one would hear no crash, — they came down as if they had fallen on a vast feather-bed. Perhaps, as he thought, the air was too full of noises for us to note what would have been in itself a startling crash.

I hovered round the Safety Vaults in State Street, where I had a good deal of destructible property of my own and others, but no one was allowed to enter them. So I saw (on Sunday morning) the fire eating its way straight toward my deposits, and millions of others with them, and thought how I should like it to have them wiped out with that red flame that was coming along clearing everything before it. But I knew all was doing that could be done, and so I took it quietly enough, and managed to sleep both Saturday and Sunday nights tolerably well, though I got up every now and then to see how far and fast the flames were spreading northward. Before Sunday night, however, they were tolerably well in hand, so far as I could learn, and on Monday all the world within reach was looking at the wilderness of ruins.

To-day, Saturday, I went with my wife to the upper story of Hovey's store on Summer Street, a great establishment, — George Gardner, you remember, owns the building, — which was almost miraculously saved. The scene from the upper windows was wonderful to behold. Right opposite, Trinity Church, its tower standing, its walls partly fallen, more imposing as a ruin than it ever was in its best estate, — everything flat to the water, so that we saw the ships in the harbor as we should have done from the same spot in the days of Blackstone (if there had been ships then and no trees in the way), here and there a tall chimney, — two or three brick piers for safes, one with a safe standing on it as calm as if nothing had happened, — piles of smoking masonry, the burnt stump of the flagstaff

in Franklin Street, groups of people looking to see where their stores were, or hunting for their safes, or round a fire-engine which was playing on the ruins that covered a safe, to cool them, so it could be got out, — cordons of military and of the police keeping off the crowds of people who have flocked from all over the country, etc., etc. . . . Everybody seems to bear up cheerfully and hopefully against the disaster, and the only thought seems to be how best and soonest to repair damages.

Things are going on pretty regularly. Froude is here lecturing; I went to hear him Thursday, and was interested. . . . After the lecture we had a pleasant meeting of the Historical Society at Mr. J. A. Lowell's, where Froude was present. Winthrop read a long and really very interesting account of the fires which had happened in Boston since its settlement, beginning with Cotton Mather's account of different ones, and coming down to the "Great Fire" of 1760. Much of what he read I find in Drake's "History of Boston," from which I also learn that the "Great Fire" began in the house of Mrs. Mary Jackson and Son at the sign of the Brazen Head in Cornhill, and that all the buildings on

Colonel Wendell's wharf were burned. My mother used to tell me that her grandfather (Col. W.) lost forty buildings in that fire, which always made me feel grand, as being the descendant of one that hath had losses, — in fact makes me feel a little grand now, in telling you of it. Most people's grandfathers in Boston, to say nothing of their great-grand-fathers, got their living working in their shirt-sleeves, but when a man's g.g. lost forty buildings, it is almost up to your sixteen quarterings that you know so much about in your Austrian experience.

O vision of that sleepless night,
What hue shall paint the mocking light
That burned and stained the orient skies
Where peaceful morning loves to rise,
As if the sun had lost his way
And dawned to make a second day, —
Above how red with fiery glow,
How dark to those it woke below!

On roof and wall, on dome and spire,
Flashed the false jewels of the fire;
Girt with her belt of glittering panes,
And crowned with starry-gleaming vanes,
Our northern queen in glory shone
With new-born splendors not her own,
And stood, transfigured in our eyes,
A victim decked for sacrifice!

The cloud still hovers overhead,
And still the midnight sky is red;
As the lost wanderer strays alone
To seek the place he called his own,
His devious footprints sadly tell
How changed the pathways known so well;
The scene, how new! The tale, how old
Ere yet the ashes have grown cold!

[In the summer of 1873, Holmes writes to Motley from the resort which was christened by his friend Appleton, "Cold roast Boston."]

May I gossip a few minutes? I write, you see, from Nahant, where I have been during July and August, staying with my wife in the cottage you must remember as Mr. Charles Amory's. . . . So I have been here, as I said, playing cuckoo in the nest, with my wife, who enjoys Nahant much more than I do — having had more or less of asthma to take off from my pleasures. Still, there has been much that is agreeable, and as a change from city life I have found it a kind of refreshment.

Many of your old friends are our neighbors. Longfellow is hard by, with Tom Appleton in the same house, and for a fortnight or so Sumner as his guest. Sumner, who was very nearly killed and buried by the newspapers, seems as well as ever, and gave us famous accounts of what he did and saw in England. . . . I have dined since I have been here at Mr. George Peabody's with Longfellow, Sumner, Appleton, and William Amory; at Cabot Lodge's with nearly the same company; at Mr. James's with L. and S., and at Longfellow's *en famille*, pretty nearly. Very pleasant dinners. . . .

Nahant is a gossipy Little Peddington kind of a place. As Alcibiades and his dog are not here, they are prattling and speculating and worrying about the cost of Mr. J——'s new house, which, externally at least, is the *handsomest country house I ever saw*, and is generally allowed to be a great success. The inside is hardly finished, except the hall and the dining-room, which are very fine. . . . On Monday we go back to Boston after two months' stay.

[In the following spring he again writes to Motley.]

I have come down — or got up — to dinner-parties as the substantial basis of my social life. They have slacked off (Novanglice) of late, so that I am now as domestic as a gallinaceous fowl, in place of chirruping and flitting from bough to bough.

In the mean time I have my little grandchild to remind me I must not think too much of the pomps and vanities of the world, with two generations crowding me along. . . . We are all well, and living along in our quiet way with as much comfort as we have any right to, and more than most people have to content themselves with. I have only one trouble I cannot get rid of, namely, that they tease me to write for every conceivable anniversary. I wrote a hymn which was sung at the delivery of Schurz's Eulogy. Waldo Higginson came this afternoon to get me to write a hymn for the dedication — no — the opening or completion, of the Memorial Hall. You remember Sydney Smith's John Bull — how he "blubbers and subscribes," — I scold and consent.

(DEDICATION OF MEMORIAL HALL, JUNE 23, 1874)

Where, girt around by savage foes,
Our nurturing Mother's shelter rose,
Behold, the lofty temple stands,
Reared by her children's grateful hands!

Firm are the pillars that defy
The volleyed thunders of the sky;
Sweet are the summer wreaths that twine
With bud and flower our martyrs' shrine.

The hues their tattered colors bore
Fall mingling on the sunlit floor

Till evening spreads her spangled pall,
And wraps in shade the storied hall.

Firm were their hearts in danger's hour,
Sweet was their manhood's morning flower,
Their hopes with rainbow hues were bright, —
How swiftly winged the sudden night!

O Mother! on thy marble page
Thy children read, from age to age,
The mighty word that upward leads
Through noble thought to nobler deeds.

[In July, 1874, Holmes writes of a summer spent in Boston.]

We are living in a desert. I feel, as I walk down Beacon Street, as if I were Lord Macaulay's New Zealander. I expect to start a fox or a woodchuck as I turn through Clarendon or Dartmouth Street, and to hear the whir of the partridge in Commonwealth Avenue. The truth is I have no country place of my own, and we are so much more comfortable in our own house here that we can hardly make up our minds to go to any strange place in the country, or by the seashore.

You think I am wedded to the pavement. True, but I am also passionately fond of the country, only I am so liable to suffer from asthma when I get off the brick sidewalk that I am virtually imprisoned, except when I can arrange my conditions in the most favorable way, in a way that happens to agree with me. . . . Few people enjoy better health than I do just so long as I am let alone and regulate my own habits; but when others want me to wear their shoes, how they do chafe and pinch! I think, if I am unsocial, it is quite as much by constitution as it is by any want of the social instinct, and I have learned to judge others very charitably in the study of my own weakness.

Our neighbors of Manhattan have an excellent jest about our crooked streets which, if they were a little more familiar with a native author of unquestionable veracity, they would strike out from the letter of "Our Boston Correspondent" where there is a source of perennial hilarity. It is worth while to reprint, for the benefit of whom it may concern, a paragraph from the authentic history of the venerable Diedrich Knickerbocker: —

"The sage council, as has been mentioned in a preceding chapter, not being able to determine upon any plan for the building of their city, — the cows in a laudable fit of patriotism, took it under their peculiar charge, and as they went to and from pasture, established paths through the bushes, on each side of which the good folks built their houses; which is one cause of the rambling and picturesque turns and labyrinths, which distinguish certain streets of New York at this very day."

To compare the situations of any dwellings in either of the great cities with those which look upon the Common, the Public Garden, the waters of the Back Bay, would be to take an unfair advantage of Fifth Avenue and Walnut Street. St. Botolph's daughter dresses in plainer clothes than her more stately sisters, but she wears an emerald on her right hand and a diamond on her left that Cybele herself need not be ashamed of.

While the inhabitants of Albany and Augusta are listening for the cracking and grinding of the breaking ice in their rivers, the Bostonians are looking for the crocuses and snow-drops in the Beacon Street front-yards. Boston is said to be in latitude 42° and something more, but Beacon Street is practically not higher than 40°, on account of its fine southern exposure. Not long after the pretty show of crocuses has made the borders look gay behind the iron fences, a faint suspicion arises in the mind of the interested spectator that the brown grass on the banks of the Common and the terraces of the State House is getting a little greenish. The change shows first in the creases and on the slopes, and one hardly knows whether it is fancy or not. There is also a spotty look about some of the naked trees that we had not noticed before, yes, the buds are swelling. The breaking-up of the ice on the Frog Pond ought to have been as carefully noted as that of the Hudson and Kennebec but it seems to have been neglected by local observers. If anybody would take the trouble to keep the record of the leafing and flowering of the trees on the Common, of the first coming of the birds, of the day when the first schooner passes West Boston Bridge, it would add a great deal to the pleasure of our spring walks through the malls, and out to the learned city beyond the river, because dull isolated facts become interesting by comparison. But one must go to the country to find people who care enough about these matters, and who are constantly enough in the midst of the sights and sounds of the opening year to take cognizance of the order of that grand procession, with March blowing his trumpet at the head of it, and April following with her green flag, and the rest coming in their turn, till February brings up the rear with his white banner.

Around the green, in morning light,
The spired and palaced summits blaze,
And, sunlike, from her Beacon-height
The dome-crowned city spreads her rays;
They span the waves, they belt the plains,
They skirt the roads with bands of white,
Till with a flash of gilded panes
Yon farthest hillside bounds the sight.
Peace, Freedom, Wealth! no fairer view,
Though with the wild-bird's restless wings
We sailed beneath the noontide's blue
Or chased the moonlight's endless rings!
Here, fitly raised by grateful hands
His holiest memory to recall,
The Hero's, Patriot's image stands;
He led our sires who won them all!

CHAPTER V

BOSTON VERSUS ENGLAND

1877

This is your month, the month of "perfect days,"
Birds in full song and blossoms all ablaze.
Nature herself your earliest welcome breathes,
Spreads every leaflet, every bower inwreathes;
Carpets her paths for your returning feet,
Puts forth her best your coming steps to greet;
And Heaven must surely find the earth in tune
When Home, Sweet Home, exhales the breath of June.

. . . .

Eight years an exile! What a weary while
Since first our herald sought the mother isle!
His snow-white flag no churlish wrong has soiled, —
He left unchallenged, he returns unspoiled.

. . . .

Here let us keep him, here he saw the light, —
His genius, wisdom, wit, are ours by right;
And if we lose him our lament will be
We have "five hundred" — *not* "as good as he."

CHAPTER V

BOSTON VERSUS ENGLAND

1877

["BOSTON has enough of England about it to make a good English Dictionary," wrote Dr. Holmes, who in recording his trans-Atlantic impressions delighted in reversing the customary method of his fellow-countrymen and invariably made his comparisons tip the scales in favor of his native haunts. During Lowell's stay in England the Doctor, in his letters, frequently voiced his preference for his own land, and later celebrated Lowell's return, with a charming poetic tribute.

He wrote to Lowell in 1877:]

I WILL venture to say that the Boston postmark looks pleasantly on the back of a letter — for you have paid your debts before sailing, I do not question.

I do not feel quite happy without reminding you once or twice in a year, or even a little oftener than that, that there is such a place as New England, and that you have some friends there who have not forgotten you, and who will be very glad to see you back again.

What can I say to interest you! The migrations of the Vicar and his wife from the blue bed to the brown were hardly more monotonous that the pendulum-swing of my existence, so far as all outward occurrences go. Yet life is never monotonous, absolutely, to me. I am a series of surprises to myself in the changes that years and ripening, and it may be a still further process which I need not name, bring about. The movement onward is like changing place in a picture gallery — the light fades from this picture and falls on that, so that you wonder where the first has gone to and see all at once the meaning of the other. Not that I am so different from other people — there may be a dozen of me, *minus* my accidents, for aught I know — say rather ten thousand. But what a strange thing life is when you have waded in up to your neck and remember the shelving sands you have trodden!

You may get as much European epidermis as you like, the strigil will always show you to be at heart an unchanged and unchangeable New Englander. You are anchored here and though your cable is three thousand miles long, it will pull you home again by and by; at least so I believe. That is just what we like, — a man who can be at his ease in Court or cloister, and yet has a bit of Yankee backbone that won't soften in spite of his knee-breeches, his having to be "with high consideration" and the rest.

The Club has flourished greatly, and proved to all of us a source of the greatest delight. I do not believe that there ever were such agreeable periodical meetings in Boston as these we have had at Parker's. We have missed you of course, but your memory and your reputation were with us. The magazine which you helped to give a start to has prospered, since its transfer to Ticknor & Fields.

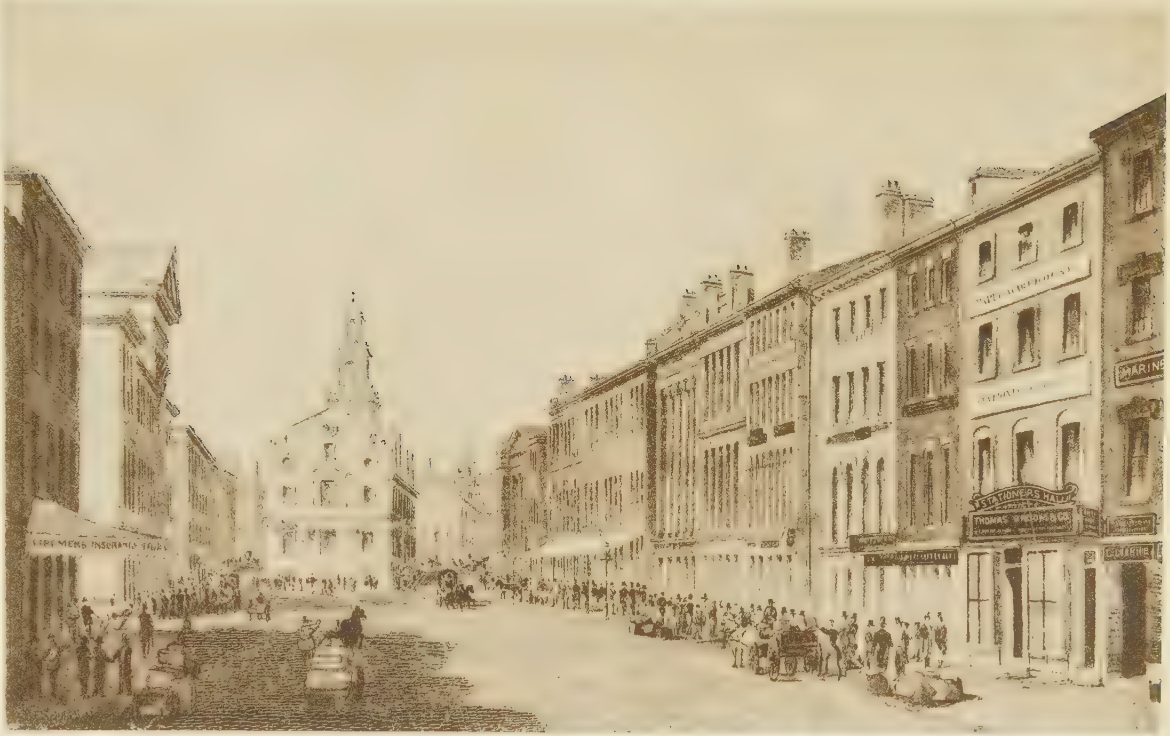
I should like very much to hear something of your every-day experiences of English life, — how you like the different classes of English people you meet, — the scholars, the upper class, and the average folk that you may have to deal with. You know that, to a Bostonian, there is nothing like a Bostonian's impression of a new people or mode of life. We carry the Common in our heads as the unit of space, the State House as her standard of architecture, and measure off men in Edward Everetts as with a yard-stick.

Perhaps you would like a word or two about the Club. No meeting the last Saturday of December, that being the 25th. The last of November we had a very good meeting for these degenerate days — Emerson *hors de combat*, mainly, Agassiz dead, Longfellow an absentee, Lowell representing — the Club — at her Imperial Majesty's Court. I feel like old Nestor talking of his companions of earlier days — divine Polyphemus, godlike Theseus, and the rest, — "men like these I have not seen and shall never look on their like" — at least until you come back and we have Longfellow and all that is left of Emerson to meet you. I say "all that is left." It is the machinery of thought that moves with difficulty, especially the memory, but we can hardly hope that the other mental powers will not fade as that has faded.

Emerson is gently fading out like a photograph — the outlines are all there, but the details are getting fainter.

When I think of myself slowly oxydating in my quiet village life, and of you in the centre of everything, yourself a centre, I smile at the contrast, and wonder whether you still remember there is such a corner of the universe as that from which I am

State Street, from an Engraving made about 1842


STATIONERS HALL
THOMAS GROOM & CO.
MARINE

writing. . . . You must be what our people call "a great success" in England; now come home (when you are ready) and you shall be Sir Oracle — not Magnus but Maximus Apollo, among your own admiring fellow-citizens.

This is our place of meeting; opposite
That towered and pillared building: look at it;
King's Chapel in the Second George's day,
Rebellion stole its regal name away, —
Stone Chapel sounded better; but at last
The poisoned name of our provincial past
Had lost its ancient venom; then once more
Stone Chapel was King's Chapel as before.

. . . .

Next the old church your wandering eye will meet —
A granite pile that stares upon the street —
Our civic temple; slanderous tongues have said
Its shape was modelled from St. Botolph's head,
Lofty, but narrow; jealous passers-by
Say Boston always held her head too high.
Turn half-way round, and let your look survey
The white façade that gleams across the way, —
The many-windowed building, tall and wide,
The palace-inn that shows its northern side
In grateful shadow when the sunbeams beat
The granite wall in summer's scorching heat.
This is the place; whether its name you spell
Tavern, or caravansera, or hotel.
Would I could steal its echoes! You should find
Such store of vanished pleasures brought to mind:

Such feasts! the laughs of many a jocund hour
That shook the mortar from King George's tower;
Such guests! What famous names its record boasts,
Whose owners wander in the mob of ghosts!
Such stories! every beam and plank is filled
With juicy wit the joyous talkers spilled.

[Lowell testified to the brilliancy of the gatherings of the Saturday Club, when he wrote from the centre of London's most cultured circles: — "I have never seen society, on the whole, so good as I used to meet at our Saturday Club."

In 1886, Dr. Holmes started with his daughter, Mrs. Sargent, upon a trip to Europe. He had not been abroad since his student days, and he remained four months, spending most of his time in England, where he was overwhelmed with attentions. His impressions of the old world at this time have been bequeathed us in one of his last volumes, "Our Hundred Days in Europe." During this triumphal journey he amuses himself, as was his wont, in comparing the conditions abroad with those at home:]

When Dickens landed in Boston, he was struck with the brightness of all the objects he saw, — buildings, signs, and so forth. When I landed in Liverpool, everything looked very dark, very dingy, very massive, in the streets I drove through. So in London. . . .

We went to the Lyceum Theatre to see Mr. Irving.

. . . Between the scenes we went behind the curtain, and saw the very curious and admirable machinery of the dramatic spectable. We made the acquaintance of several imps and demons, who were got up wonderfully well. Ellen Terry was as fascinating as ever. I remember that once before I had met her and Mr. Irving behind the scenes. It was at the Boston Theatre, and while I was talking with them a very heavy piece of scenery came crashing down, and filled the whole place with dust. It was but a short distance from where we were standing, and I could not help thinking how near our several life-dramas came to a simultaneous *exeunt omnes.*

To one whose eyes are used to Park Street and the Old South steeples as the standards of height, a spire which climbs four hundred feet towards the sky is a new sensation. . . .

Cheyne (pronounced "Chainie") Walk is a somewhat extended range of buildings. Cheyne Row is a passage which reminded me a little of my old habitat, Montgomery Place, now Bosworth Street.

There are three grades of recognition, entirely distinct from each other in the meeting of two persons from different countries who speak the same language, — an American and an Englishman, for instance; the meeting of two Americans from different cities, as of a Bostonian and a New Yorker or a Chicagoan; and the meeting of two from the same city, as of two Bostonians. . . . Let me give a few practical examples. An American and an Englishman meet in a foreign land. The Englishman has occasion to mention his weight, which he finds has gained in the course of his travels. "How much is it now?" asks the American. "Fourteen stone. How much do you weigh?" "Within four pounds of two hundred." Neither of them takes at once any clear idea of what the other weighs. The American has never thought of his own, or his friends', or anybody's weight in *stones* of fourteen pounds. The Englishman has never thought of any one's weight in *pounds.* They can calculate very well with a slip of paper and a pencil, but not the less is their language but half intelligible as they speak and listen. The same thing is in a measure true of other matters they talk about. "It is about as large a space as the Common," says the Boston man. "It is about as large as St. James's Park," says the Londoner. "As high as the State House," says the Bostonian, or "as tall as Bunker Hill Monument," or "about as big as the Frog

Park Street Church

Pond," where the Londoner would take St. Paul's, the Nelson Column, the Serpentine, as his standard of comparison. The difference in scale does not stop here: it runs through a greater part of the objects of thought and conversation. . . . Conversation between two Londoners, two New Yorkers, two Bostonians, requires no footnotes, which is a great advantage in their intercourse. . . . How well they understand each other! Thirty-two degrees marks the freezing-point. Two hundred and twelve marks the boiling point. They have the same scale, the same fixed points, the same record — and no wonder they prefer each other's company!

We Boston people are so bright and wide-awake, and have been really so much in advance of our fellow-barbarians with our "Monthly Anthologies," and "Atlantic Monthlies," and "North American Reviews," that we have been in danger of thinking our local scale was the absolute one of excellence — forgetting that 212 Fahrenheit is but 100 Centigrade. That is one way of looking at ourselves; and the other, as you know, is looking on ourselves as intellectual colonial dependents, and accepting that "certain condescension in foreigners," which you [Lowell] have so deliciously exploded, as all that we are entitled to."

The 17th of June is memorable in the annals of my country. On that day in the year 1775 the battle of Bunker's Hill was fought on the height I see from the window of my library, where I am now writing. The monument raised in memory of our defeat, which was in truth a victory, is almost as much a part of the furniture of my room as its chairs and tables; outside, as they are inside, furniture. But the 17th of June 1886, is memorable to me above all other anniversaries of that day I have known. For on that day I received from the ancient University of Cambridge, England, the degree of Doctor of Letters, "Doctor Litt.," in its abbreviated academic form. The honor was an unexpected one" that is, until a short time before it was conferred.

In looking at the monuments which I saw in London and elsewhere in England, certain resemblances, comparisons, parallels, contrasts, and suggestions obtruded themselves upon my consciousness. We have one steeple in Boston which to my eyes seems absolutely perfect: that of the Central Church, at the corner of Newbury and Berkeley streets. Its resemblance to the spire of Salisbury had always struck me. On mentioning this to the late Mr. Richardson, the very distinguished architect, he said to me that he thought it more like that of the Cathedral of Chartres. One of the best living architects agreed with me as to the similarity to that of Salisbury. It does not copy either exactly, but, if it had twice its actual dimensions, would compare well with the best of the two, if one is better than the other. Saint-Martin-in-the-Fields made me feel as if I were in Boston. Our Arlington Street Church copies it pretty closely, but Mr. Gilman left out the columns.

> On other shores, above their mouldering towns,
> In sullen pomp the tall cathedral frowns.
>
> . . . .
>
> Yet Faith's pure hymn, beneath its shelter rude,
> Breathes out as sweetly to the tangled wood
> As where the rays through pictured glories pour
> On marble shaft and tessellated floor; —
> Heaven asks no surplice round the heart that feels,
> And all is holy where devotion kneels.

As for the kind of monument such as I see from my library window standing on the summit of Bunker Hill, and have recently seen for the first time at Washington, on a larger scale, I own that I think a built-up obelisk a poor affair as compared with an Egyptian monolith of the same form. It was a triumph of skill to quarry, to shape, to transport, to cover with expressive symbols, to erect, such a stone as that which has been transferred to the Thames Embankment, or that which now stands in Central Park, New York. Each of its four sides is a page of history, written so as to endure through a score of centuries. A built-up obelisk requires very little more than brute labor. A child can shape its model from a carrot or a parsnip, and set it up in miniature with blocks of loaf sugar. It teaches nothing, and the stranger must go to his guide-book to know what it is there for. I was led into many reflections by a sight of the Washington Monument. I found it was almost the same thing at a mile's distance as the Bunker Hill Monument at half a mile's distance; and unless the eye had some means of measuring the space between itself and the stone shaft, one was about as good as the other.

What better provision can be made for mortal man than such as our own Boston can afford its wealthy children? A palace on Commonwealth Avenue or on Beacon Street; a country-place at Framingham or Lenox; a seaside residence at Nahant, Beverly Farms, Newport, or Bar Harbor; a pew at Trinity or King's Chapel; a tomb at Mount Auburn, or Forest Hills; with the prospect of a

Boston from the Public Garden, about 1880

memorial stained-window after his lamented demise, —is not that a pretty programme to offer a candidate for human existence?

I, for one, being myself as inveterately rooted an American of the Boston variety as ever saw himself mirrored in the Frog Pond, hope that the exchanges of emigrants and re-emigrants will be much more evenly balanced by and by than at present. I hope that more Englishmen like James Smithson will help to build up our scientific and literary institutions. I hope that more Americans like George Peabody will call down the blessings of the English people by noble benefactions to the cause of charity. It was with deep feelings of pride and gratitude that I looked upon the bust of Longfellow, holding its place among the monuments of England's greatest and best children. I see with equal pleasure and pride that one of our own large-hearted countrymen has honored the memory of three English poets, Milton, Herbert, and Cowper, by the gift of two beautiful stained-windows, and with still ampler munificence is erecting a stately fountain in the birthplace of Shakespeare. Such acts as these make us feel more and more the truth of the generous sentiment which closes the ode of Washington Allston, "America to Great Britain": "We are one!"

Let not the too mature traveller think it [travelling] will change any of his habits. It will interrupt his routine for a while, and then he will settle down into his former self, and be just what he was before. I brought home a pair of shoes I had made in London; they do not fit like those I had before I left, and I rarely wear them. It is just so with the new habits I formed and the old ones I left behind me.

After memorable interviews, and kindest hospitalities, and grand sights, and huge influx of patriotic pride, — for every American owns all America, — I come back with the feeling which a boned turkey might experience, if, retaining his consciousness, he were allowed to resume his skeleton.

Welcome, O Fighting Gladiator, and Recumbent Cleopatra, and Dying Warrior (reproduced in the calcined mineral of Lutetia) that crown my loaded shelves! Welcome, ye triumphs of pictorial art (repeated by the magic graver) that look down from the walls of my sacred cell! . . . The old books look out from the shelves, and I seem to read on their backs something besides their titles, — a kind of solemn greeting. The crimson carpet flushes warm under my feet. The arm-chair hugs me; the swivel-chair spins round with me, as if it were giddy with pleasure; the vast recumbent fauteuil stretches itself out under my weight, as one joyous with food and wine stretches in after-dinner laughter.

New England, we love thee; no time can erase
From the hearts of thy children the smile on thy face.
'T is the mothers fond look of affection and pride,
As she gives her fair son to the arms of his bride.

. . . .

Here 's to all the good people, wherever they be,
Who have grown in the shade of the liberty-tree;
We all love its leaves, and its blossoms and fruit,
But pray have a care of the fence round its root.

We should like to talk big; it 's a kind of a right,
When the tongue has got loose and the waistband
grown tight;
But, as pretty Miss Prudence remarked to her beau,
On its own heap of compost, no biddy should crow.

Enough! There are gentlemen waiting to talk,
Whose words are to mine as the flower to the stalk.
Stand by your old mother whatever befall;
God bless all her children! Good night to you all!

CHAPTER VI

"THE HUB"

The Angel spake: "This threefold hill shall be
The home of Arts, the nurse of Liberty!
Our stately summit from its shaft shall pour
Its deep-red blaze along the darkened shore;
Emblem of thoughts that, kindling far and wide,
In danger's night shall be a nation's guide.
One swelling crest the citadel shall crown,
Its slanted bastions black with battle's frown,
And bid the sons that tread its scowling heights
Bare their strong arms for man and all his rights!
One silent steep along the northern wave
Shall hold the patriarch's and the hero's grave;
When fades the torch, when o'er the peaceful scene
The embattled fortress smiles in living green,
The cross of Faith, the anchor staff of Hope,
Shall stand eternal on its grassy slope;
There through all time shall faithful memory tell
'Here virtue toiled, and Patriot valor fell;
Thy free, proud fathers slumber at thy side;
Live as they lived, or perish as they died.'"

CHAPTER VI

"THE HUB"

I LOVE this old place where I was born; the heart of the world beats under the three hills of Boston, Sir! I love this great land with so many tall men in it, and so many good, noble women.

A man can see further, Sir, — he said one day, — from the top of Boston State House, and see more that is worth seeing, than from all the pyramids and turrets and steeples in all the places in the world! No smoke, Sir; no fog, Sir; and a clean sweep from the Outer Light and the sea beyond it to the New Hampshire mountains! Yes, Sir, — and there are great truths that are higher than mountains and broader than seas, that people are looking for from the tops of these hills of ours, — such as the world never saw, though it might have seen them at Jerusalem, if its eyes had been open!

It's a slow business, this of getting the ark launched. The Jordan was n't deep enough, and the Tiber was n't deep enough, and the Rhone was n't deep enough, — and perhaps the Charles is n't deep enough; but I don't feel sure of that, Sir, and I love to hear the workmen knocking at the old blocks of tradition and making the ways smooth with the oil of the Good Samaritan. I don't know, Sir, — but I do think she stirs a little, I do believe she slides; and when I think of what a work that is for the dear old three-breasted mother of American liberty, I would not take all the glory of all the greatest cities in the world for my birthright in the soil of little Boston!

A new race, and a whole new world for the new-born human soul to work in! And Boston is the brain of it, and has been any time these three hundred years! That's all I claim for Boston, — that it is the thinking centre of the continent, and therefore of the planet. . . . Don't talk to me of modesty, I'm past that! There is n't a thing that was ever said or done in Boston, from pitching tea overboard to the last ecclesiastical lie it tore to tatters and flung into the dock, that was n't thought very indelicate by some fool or tyrant or bigot, and all the entrails of commercial and spiritual conservatism are twisted into colics as often as this revolutionary brain of ours has a fit of thinking come over it.

When I heard the young fellow's exclamation, I looked round the table with curiosity . . . what I heard began so: —

— By the Frog Pond, when there were frogs in it, and the folks used to come down from the tents on 'Lection and Independence days with their pails to get water to make egg-pop with. Born in Boston; went to school in Boston as long as the boys would let me. — The little man groaned, turned, as if to look round, and went on. — Ran away from school one day to see Phillips hung for killing Denegri with a loggerhead. That was in flip days, when there were always two or three loggerheads in the fire. I 'm a Boston boy, I tell you, — born at the North End, and mean to be buried on Copp's Hill, with the good underground people, — the Worthylakes, and the rest of 'em. Yes, Sir, — up on the old hill, where they buried Captain Daniel Malcolm in a stone grave, ten feet deep, to keep him safe from the red-coats, in these old times when the world was frozen up tight and there was n't but one spot open, and that was right over Faneuil Hall, — and black enough it looked, I tell you! There 's where my bones shall lie, Sir, and rattle away when the big guns go off at the Navy Yard opposite! Full of crooked little streets; — but I tell you Boston has opened, and kept open, more turnpikes that lead straight to free thought and free speech and free deeds than any other city of live men or dead men, — I don't care how broad their streets are, nor how high their steeples!

— How high is Bosting meet'n' house? — said a person with black whiskers and imperial. . . .

— How high? said the little man. — As high as the first step of the stairs that lead to the New Jerusalem. Is n't that high enough?

— It is, — I said. The great end of being is to harmonize man with the order of things, and the church has been a good pitch-pipe, and may be so still. But who shall tune the pitch-pipe?

— Were you born in Boston, Sir? — said the little man, — looking eager and excited.

I was not, — I replied.

— It 's a pity, — it 's a pity, — said the little man; — it 's the place to be born in. But if you can't fix it so as to be born here, you can come and live here. Old Ben Franklin, the father of American science and the American Union, was n't ashamed to be

The Frog Pond

born here. Jim Otis, the father of American Independence, bothered about the Cape Cod marshes awhile, but he came to Boston as soon as he got big enough. Joe Warren the first bloody ruffled-shirt of the Revolution, was as good as born here. Parson Channing strolled along this way from Newport, and stayed here. Pity old Sam Hopkins had n't come too; we 'd have made a man of him,—poor, dear, good old Christian heathen! There he lies, as peaceful as a young baby in the old burying-ground! I 've stood on the slab many a time . . . this is the great Macadamizing place, — always cracking up something.

— Cracking up Boston folks,— said the gentleman with the diamond-pin.

I never thought he would come to good when I heard him attempting to sneer at an unoffending city so respectable as Boston. After a man begins to attack the State House, when he gets bitter about the Frog Pond, you may be sure there is not much left of him. Poor Edgar Poe died in the hospital soon after he got into this way of talking; and so sure as you find an unfortunate fellow reduced to this pass, you had better begin praying for him, and stop lending him money, for he is on his last legs. Remember poor Edgar! He is dead and gone; but the State House has its cupola fresh-gilded, and the Frog Pond has got a fountain that squirts up a hundred feet into the air and glorifies that humble sheet with a fine display of provincial rainbows.

I question everything; but if I find Bunker Hill Monument standing as straight as when I leaned against it a year or ten years ago, I am not much afraid that Bunker Hill will cave in if I trust myself again on the soil of it. . . .

The Monument is an awful place to visit, I said. The waves of time are like the waves of the ocean; the only thing they beat against without destroying it is a rock; and they destroy that at last. But it takes a good while. There is a stone now standing in very good order that was as old as a monument of Louis XIV and Queen Anne's day is now when Joseph went down into Egypt. Think of the shaft on Bunker Hill standing in the sunshine on the morning of January 1st in the year 5872!

—It won't be standing,—the Master said.—We are poor bunglers compared to those old Egyptians. There are no joints in one of their obelisks. . . .

I was thinking of something very different. I was indulging a fancy of mine about the Man who is to sit at the foot of the Monument for one, or may be two or three thousand years. As long as the monument stands there and there is a city near it, there will always be a man to take the names of visitors and extract a small tribute from their pockets, I suppose. I sometimes get to thinking of the long, unbroken succession of these men, until they come to look like one Man; continuous in being unchanging as the stone he watches, looking upon the successive generations of human beings as they come and go, and out-living all the dynasties of the world in all probability. It has come to pass that I never speak to the Man of the Monument without wanting to take off my hat and feeling as if I were looking down the vista of twenty or thirty centuries.

— Sin has many tools but a lie is the handle which fits them all.

— I think, Sir, — said the divinity student, you must intend that for one of the sayings of the Seven Wise Men of Boston you were speaking of the other day.

—I thank you my young friend, —was my reply, —but I must say something better than that, before I could pretend to fill out the number.

The schoolmistress wanted to know how many of these sayings were on record, and what, and by whom said.

—Why, let us see, — there is that one of Benjamin Franklin, "the great Bostonian," . . . To be sure, he said a great many wise things, — and I don't feel sure he did n't borrow this, — he speaks as if it were old. But then he applied it so neatly! —

"He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you yourself have obliged."

—Then there is that glorious Epicurian paradox, uttered by my friend, the Historian, in one of his flashing moments: —

"Give us the luxuries of life, and we will dispense with its necessities."

—To these must certainly be added that other saying of one of the wittiest of men: —

"Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris."

The divinity student looked grave at this, but said nothing.

The schoolmistress spoke out, and said she did n't think the wit meant any irreverence. It was only another way of saying, Paris is a heavenly place after New York, or Boston.

A jaunty-looking person, who had come in with the young fellow they call John, — evidently a stranger, — said there was one more wise man's saying that he had heard; it was about our place, but he did n't know who said it. A civil curiosity was manifested by the company to hear the fourth wise saying. I heard him distinctly whispering to the young fellow who brought him to dinner, *Shall I tell it?* To which the answer was, Go ahead! — Well, — he said, — this was what I heard: —

"Boston State House is the hub of the solar system. You could n't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar."

— Sir, I said, — I am gratified with your remark. It expresses with pleasing vivacity that which I have sometimes heard uttered with malignant dulness. The satire of the remark is essentially true of Boston, — and of all other considerable, — and inconsiderable places with which I have had the privilege of being acquainted. Cockneys think London is the only place in the world. Frenchmen

— you remember the line about Paris, the Court, the World, etc. . . . "See Naples and die." It is quite as bad with smaller places. I have been about lecturing, you know, and have found the following propositions to hold true of all of them:—

1. The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town and city.

2. If more than fifty years have passed since its foundation, it is affectionately styled by the inhabitants the "*good old* town of" — (whatever its name may happen to be).

3. Every collection of its inhabitants that comes together to listen to a stranger is invariably declared to be a "remarkably intelligent audience."

4. The climate of the place is particularly favorable to longevity.

5. It contains several persons of vast talent little known to the world. (One or two of them, you may remember, sent short pieces to the "Pactolian" some time since, which were "respectfully declined.")

Boston is just like other places of its size; only perhaps, considering its excellent fish-market, paid fire-department, superior monthly publications, and correct habit of spelling the English language, *The Old City Hall, 1858*

it has some right to look down on the mob of cities. I'll tell you, though, if you want to know it, what is the real offense of Boston. It drains a large watershed of its intellect, and will not itself be drained. If it would only send away its first-rate men, instead of its second-rate ones (no offense to the well-known exceptions, of which we are always proud), we should be spared such epigrammatic remarks as that which the gentleman has quoted. There can never be a real metropolis in this country until the biggest centre can drain the lesser ones of their talent and wealth.

You have seen our gilt dome, and no doubt you've been told
That the orbs of the universe round it are rolled;
But I'll own it to you, and I ought to know best,
That this is n't quite true of all stars of the West.

You'll go to Mount Auburn — we'll show you the track, —
And can stay there, — unless you prefer to come back;
And Bunker's tall shaft you can climb if you will,
But you'll puff like a paragraph praising a pill.

You must see — but you *have* seen — our old Faneuil Hall,
Our churches, our school-rooms, our sample-rooms, all;
And, perhaps, though the idiots must have their jokes,
You have found our good people much like other folks.

A bit of gilding here and there has a wonderful effect in enlivening a landscape or an apartment.

Napoleon consoled the Parisians in their year of defeat by gilding the dome of the Invalides. Boston glorified her State House and herself at the expense of a few sheets of gold leaf laid on the dome, which shines like a sun in the eyes of her citizens, and like a star in those of the approaching traveller.

— There are no such women as the Boston women, Sir, — he said. . . . — But confound the make-believe women we have turned loose in our streets! Where do they come from? Not out of Boston parlors, I trust. Why, there is n't a beast or a bird that would drag its tail through the dirt in the way these creatures do their dresses. Because a queen or a duchess wears long robes on great occasions, a maid-of-all-work or a factory-girl thinks she must make herself a nuisance by trailing through the street, picking up and carrying about with her — pah! — that 's what I call getting vulgarity into your bones and marrow. Making believe be what you are not is the essence of vulgarity. Show over dirt is the one attribute of vulgar people. If any man can walk behind one of these women and see what she rakes up as she goes, and not feel squeamish, he has got a tough stomach. I would n't let one of 'em into my room without serving 'em as David served Saul at the cave of the wilderness, cut off his skirts, Sir! cut off his skirts. . . . Don't tell me that a true lady ever sacrifices the duty of keeping all about her sweet and clean to the wish of making a vulgar show. I won't believe it of a lady. There are some things that no fashion has any right to touch, and cleanliness is one of those things. If a woman wishes to show that her husband or father has got money, which she wants to spend, but does n't know how, let her buy a yard or two of silk and pin it to her dress when she goes out to walk, but let her unpin it before she goes into the house.

[We] have had our sensibilities greatly worked upon, our patriotism chilled, our local pride outraged, by the monstrosities which have been allowed to deform our beautiful public grounds. We have to be very careful in conducting a visitor, say from his marble-fronted hotel to the City Hall. Keep straight along after entering the Garden, — you will not care to inspect the little figure of the military gentleman to your right. Yes, the Cochituate water is drinkable, but I think I would not turn aside to visit that small fabric which makes believe it is a temple and is a weak-eyed fountain feebly weeping over its insignificance. About that other stone misfortune, cruelly reminding us of the "Boston Massacre," we will not discourse; it is not imposing, and is rarely spoken of.

What a mortification to the inhabitants of a city with some hereditary and contemporary claims to cultivation; which has noble edifices, grand libraries, educational institutions of the highest grade, an art-gallery filled with the finest models and rich in painting and statuary, — a stately city that stretches both arms across the Charles to clasp the hands of Harvard, her twin-sister, each lending lustre to the other like double stars, — what a pity that she should be so disfigured by crude attempts to adorn her and commemorate her past that her most loving children blush for her artificial deformities amidst the wealth of her natural beauties! One hardly knows which to groan over most sadly, — the tearing down of old monuments, the shelling of the Parthenon, the overthrow of the pillared temples of Rome, and in a humbler way the destruction of the old Hancock House, or the erection of monuments which are to be a perpetual eyesore to ourselves and our descendants.

Ever since I paid ten cents for a peep through the telescope on the Common, and saw the transit of Venus, my whole idea of the creation has been singu-

The Hancock House, on Beacon Street next to the State House

larly changed. The planet I beheld was not much less in size than the one on which we live. If I had been looking on (this) planet (from) outside its orbit, instead of looking on Venus, I should have seen nearly the same sight as that for which I was paying my dime. Is this little globule, no bigger than a marble, the Earth on which I live, with all its oceans and continents, with all its tornadoes and volcanoes, its mighty cities, its myriads of inhabitants? I have never got over the shock, as it were, of my discovery. There are some things we believe but do not know, there are others that we know, but, in our habitual state of mind, hardly believe. I know something of the relative size of the planets. I have seen Venus. The Earth on which I live has never been the same to me since that time.

All my human sentiments, all my religious beliefs, all my conception of my relation in space for fractional rights in the universe, seemed to have undergone a change. From this vast and vague confusion of all my standards I gradually returned to the more immediate phenomena about me. This little globule evolved itself about me in its vast complexity and gradually regained its importance. In looking at our planet equipped and provisioned for a long voyage in space, — its almost boundless stores of coal and other inflammable materials, its untired renewal of the forms of life, the ever growing control over the powers of Nature which its inhabitants are acquiring, — all these things point to its fitness for a duration transcending all our ordinary measures of time. These conditions render possible the only theory which can "justify the ways of God to man," namely, that this colony of the universe is an educational institution so far as the human race is concerned. On this theory I base my hope for myself and my fellow-creatures. If, in the face of all the so-called evil to which I cannot close my eyes, I have managed to retain a cheerful optimism, it is because this educational theory is the basis of my working creed.

Alone! no climber of an Alpine cliff,
No Arctic venturer on the waveless sea,
Feels the dread stillness round him as it chills
The heart of him who leaves the slumbering earth
To watch the silent worlds that crowd the sky.

. . . .

So have I grown companion to myself,
And to the wandering spirits of the air
That smile and whisper round us in our dreams.
Thus have I learned to search if I may know
The whence and why of all beneath the stars
And all beyond them, and to weigh my life

As in a balance, — poising good and ill
Against each other, — asking of the Power
That flung me forth among the whirling worlds,
If I am heir to any inborn right,
Or only as an atom of the dust
That every wind may blow where'er it will.

It is here, Sir! right here! . . . in this old new city of Boston, — this remote provincial corner of a provincial nation, that the Battle of the Standard is fighting, and was fighting before we were born, and will be fighting when we are dead and gone, — please God! The *battle* goes on everywhere throughout civilization; but here, here, here is the broad white flag flying which proclaims, first of all, peace and good will to men, and next to that, the absolute, unconditional spiritual liberty of each individual immortal soul! The three-hilled city against the seven-hilled city! . . . I swear to you, Sir, I believe that these two centres of civilization are just exactly the two points that close the circuit in the battery of our planetary intelligence! . . . we have got the new heavens and the new earth over us and under us! Was there ever anything in Italy, I should like to know, like a Boston sunset?

Yes, — Boston sunsets; perhaps they 're as good in some other places but I know 'em best here. Anyhow, the American skies are different from anything they see in the Old World. Yes, and the rocks are different, and everything that comes out of the soil, from grass to Indians, is different.

I look at your faces, — I'm sure there are some from
The three-breasted mother I count as my own;
You think you remember the place you have come from,
But how it has changed in the years that have flown!

Unaltered, 't is true, is the hall we call "Funnel,"
Still fights the "Old South" in the battle for life,
But we've opened our door to the West through the tunnel,
And we've cut off Fort Hill with our Amazon Knife.

You should see the new Westminster Boston has builded, —
Its mansions, its spires, its museums of arts, —
You should see the great dome we have gorgeously gilded;
'T is the light of our eyes, 't is the joy of our hearts.

When first in his path a young asteroid found it,
As he sailed through the skies with the stars in his wake,
He thought 't was the sun, and kept circling around it
Till Edison signalled, "You 've made a mistake."

We are proud of our city, — her fast-growing figure,
The warp and the woof of her brain and her hands, —
But we're proudest of all that her heart has grown bigger,
And warms with fresh blood as her girdle expands.

CHAPTER VII

BOSTON THE LECTURE CRADLE

"Now, then, Professor, fortune has decreed
That you, this evening, shall be first to read, —
Lucky for us that listen, for in fact
Who reads this poem must know how to *act*."
Right well she knew that in his greener age
He had a mighty hankering for the stage.
The patient audience had not long to wait;
Pleased with his chance, he smiled and took the bait;
Through his wild hair his coaxing fingers ran, —
He spread the page before him and began.

CHAPTER VII

BOSTON THE LECTURE CRADLE

[THE "lecture-habit" of this country was in its heyday during Dr. Holmes's earlier years. Massachusetts was the cradle of the Lyceum, first organized in 1829, and Boston was the hand that rocked the cradle. The founding of the Lowell Institute, which occurred ten years later, was an occurrence of far-reaching importance. In the decade of 1849–50 the Lowell Lectures became a vital factor in the city's life, and Boston had the glory of being herself the principal source of supply. Among her sons who ornamented the lecture platform were Webster, Choate, Phillips, Channing, Sumner, Emerson, Lowell, Starr King, Winthrop, Parker, James Freeman Clarke, Edward Everett Hale, and many others, among whom may be mentioned the ever-popular "Autocrat," who has amusingly described the typical audience of his early days.]

HAVE I ever acted in private theatricals? Often. I have played the part of the "Poor Gentleman," before a great many audiences, — more, I trust, than I shall ever face again. I did not wear a stage costume, nor a wig, nor a mustache of burnt cork, but I was placarded and announced as a public performer, and at the proper hour I came forward with the balletdancer's smile upon my countenance, and made my bow and acted my part. I have seen my name stuck up in letters so big that I was ashamed to show myself in the place by daylight. I have gone to a town with a sober literary essay in my pocket, and seen myself everywhere announced as the most desperate of *buffos,* — one who was obliged to restrain himself in the full exercise of his powers, from prudential considerations. I have been through as many hardships as Ulysses, in the pursuit of my histrionic vocation. I have travelled in cars until the conductors all knew me like a brother. I have run off the rails, and stuck all night in snow-drifts, and sat behind females that would have the window open when one could not wink without his eyelids freezing together.

Two Lyceum assemblies, of five hundred each, are so near alike, that they are absolutely indistinguishable in many cases by any definite mark, and there is nothing but the place and time by which one can tell the "remarkably intelligent audience" of a town of New York, or Ohio, from one in any New England town of similar size. . . . One knows pretty well even the look the audience will have, before he goes in.

Front seats: a few old folks, — shiny-headed, — slant up best ear towards the speaker, — drop off asleep after a while, when air begins to get a little narcotic with carbonic acid. Bright women's faces, young and middle-aged, a little behind these, but toward the front, — (pick out the best and lecture mainly to that.) Here and there a countenance, sharp and scholarlike, and a dozen pretty female ones sprinkled about. An indefinite number of pairs of young people, — happy, but not always very attentive. Boys, in the background, more or less quiet! Dull faces, here, there, — in how many places! I don't say dull *people*, but faces without a ray of sympathy or movement of expression. They are what kill the lecturer. These negative faces with their vacuous eyes and stony lineaments pump and suck the warm soul out of him.

[During his lecture-tours about the country, Dr. Holmes had an opportunity to study the characteristics of innumerable hotels and taverns.]

Don't talk to me about taverns! There is just one genuine, clean, decent, palatable thing occasionally to be had in them — namely, a boiled egg. The soups taste pretty good sometimes, but their sources are involved in a darker mystery than that of the Nile. Omelettes taste as if they had been carried in the waiter's hat, or fried in an old boot. I ordered scrambled eggs one day. It must be they had been scrambled for by somebody, but who — who in the possession of sound reason could have scrambled for what I had set before me under that name? . . . Then the waiters with their napkins — what don't they do with those napkins! Mention any one thing of which you can say with truth, "That they do not do."

No; give me a home, or a home like mine, where all is clean and sweet, where coffee has preëxisted in the berry, and tea has still faint recollections of the pigtails that dangled about the plant from which it was picked, where butter has not the prevailing character which Pope assigned to Denham, where soup could look you in the face if it had "eyes" (which it has not), and where the comely Anne or the gracious Margaret takes the place of these napkin-bearing animals.

[In 1876 Holmes writes to his friend Motley:]

I am most devoutly thankful that my seven months' lectures are at last over, and I am gradually beginning to come to myself, like one awakening from a trance or a fit of intoxication. You know that the steady tramp of a regiment would rock the Menai bridge from its fastenings, and so all military bodies break their step in crossing it. This reiteration of lectures in even march, month after month, produces some such oscillations in one's mind, and he longs, after a certain time, to break up their uniformity. If they kept on long enough, Harvard would move to Somerville. . . .

I have done enough to know what work means, and should think I had been a hard worker if I did not see what others have accomplished. I can never look on those great histories of yours and think what toil they cost, what dogged perseverance as well as higher qualities they imply, without feeling almost as if I had been an idler.

[In response to one of the many appeals made him for patriotic poems, Dr. Holmes protests that there is a limit beyond which even the poet must refuse to go. He explains that he has recently done his part to "save the Old South."]

I have lectured steadily seven months from October to May, and have been writing for "The Atlantic" regularly since January, and I have promised a gratuitous lecture to a "banquet" of ladies this autumn. It is enough for me, and I do not want to plague myself with pumping up patriotism and pouring it into stanzas. I want to get away as soon as I can and lay up my heels and do nothing but read story-books.

"So easy! just sit down and write what comes into your head." Tell that to the merinoes — (I adapt the saying to the mountain district).

Full sevenscore years our city's pride —
  The comely Southern spire —
Has cast its shadow, and defied
  The storm, the foe, the fire;
Sad is the sight our eyes behold;
  Woe to the three-hilled town,
When through the land the tale is told —
  "The brave 'Old South' is down!"

. . . .

The darkened skies, alas! have seen
  Our monarch tree laid low,
And spread in ruins o'er the green,
  But Nature struck the blow;
No scheming thrift its downfall planned,
  It felt no edge of steel,
No soulless hireling raised his hand
  The deadly stroke to deal.

In bridal garlands, pale and mute,
  Still pleads the storied tower;

The Old South Church

These are the blossoms, but the fruit
  Awaits the golden shower;
The spire still greets the morning sun, —
  Say, shall it stand or fall?
Help, ere the spoiler has begun!
  Help, each, and God help all!

It costs sw . . t; it costs nerve-fat; it costs phosphorus, to do anything worth doing.

I must excuse myself. I have given what I could spare to the "Old South" Fund. I have written a poem, — some verses, at any rate, — printed in the "Daily Advertiser" under the title "A Last Appeal," to stir up people as much as I knew how to. And now I have ground my tune and taken my hand-organ on my back, I cannot make up my mind to come back to the same doorstep and begin grinding again. Seriously and absolutely, you must call other street musicians.

If I do not look out I shall have to write, instead of "The Song of the Shirt," "The Song of the Sheet" (of paper), and draw tears from the eyes of everybody by the picture: —

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A scribbler holding a used-up pen
Sat racking his used-up head.

[In September, 1887, Holmes writes to a friend in Europe:]

For the first time since some early date, whether A.D. or A. Mundi, I hardly know, I have got my harness off and am standing for a month or two in the stall, so to speak. In other words, I have no literary work in hand at this moment, and am lolling in a rocking-chair at my autumnal fireside.

So let me have my sweet do-nothing, as the Italians say; and let poor old Dobbin stand in the stall with his harness off, munching his hay and oats, and thinking when he is next to be trotted out, hoping it will not be yet awhile.

I have lived so long stationary, that I have become intensely local, and doubtless in many ways narrow. I should like to breathe the air of the great outer world for a while, but I am so sure to suffer from asthmatic trouble, if I trust myself in strange places, that I consider myself as a kind of prisoner for life, and am very thankful that my condemned cell is so much to my liking. There are some valuable qualities about an old provincial friend like me, to a cosmopolitan like yourself. He keeps the home flavor, a whiff of which from his garments is now and then as pleasant, I am willing to believe, as the scent of the lavender in which fair linen has been laid away in old bureau drawers. It is not the fragrance of the garden, but there is something which reaches the memory in it and sets us thinking of seasons that are dead and gone, and what they carried away with them.

I am a little overwhelmed with my new reputation as a gardener; yet as I have succeeded in raising as many cauliflowers and cabbages that did not head, as many rat-tailed carrots and ram's-horn radishes, in our Cambridge sand-patch, which we called a garden, as any other horticulturist could show from the same surface of ground, I *have* some claim to the title.

I see some of the London journals have been attacking some of their literary people for lecturing, on the ground of its being a public exhibition of themselves for money. . . . To this I reply . . . Her most Gracious Majesty, the Queen, exhibits herself to the public as a part of the service for which she is paid. We do not consider it low-bred in her to pronounce her own speech, and should prefer it so to hearing it from any other person, or reading it. His Grace and his Lordship exhibit themselves very often for popularity, and their houses every day for money. — No, if a man shows himself other than he is, if he belittles himself before an audience for hire, then he acts unworthily. But a true word, fresh from the lips of a true man, is worth paying for, at the rate of eight dollars a day, or even of fifty dollars a lecture. The taunt must be an outbreak of jealousy against the renowned authors who have the audacity to be also orators. The sub-lieutenants (of the press) stick a too popular writer and speaker with an epithet in England, instead of with a rapier, as in France. — Poh!

The weather here is very cold and the spring puns are very backward. Early Joe Millers, though forced to be up by the 1st of April are like to yield but a poor crop. The *art o' jokes* don't flourish. I wish you to see that we are some *punkins* here in the Hub town, though you have the *demireputation* of making worse puns and more of them in your city than are made in any other habitable portion of the globe.

All lecturers, all professors, all schoolmasters, have ruts and grooves in their minds into which their conversation is perpetually sliding. Did you never, in riding through the woods in a still June evening, suddenly feel that you had passed into a warm stratum of air, and in a minute or two strike the chill layer of atmosphere beyond? Did you never, in cleaving the green waters of the Back Bay, — where the Provincial blue-noses are in the habit of beating the "Metropolitan" boat-clubs, — find yourself in a tepid streak, a narrow, local gulf-stream, a gratuitous warm-bath a little underdone, through which your glistening shoulders soon flashed, to bring you back to the cold realities of full-sea temperature!

Just so, in talking to any of the characters above referred to, one not unfrequently finds a sudden change in the style of the conversation. The lack-lustre eye, rayless as a Beacon street door-plate in August, all at once fills with light; the face flings itself wide open like the church-portals when the bride and bridegroom enter; the little man grows in stature before your eyes, like the small prisoner with hair on end, beloved yet dreaded in early childhood; you were talking with a dwarf and an imbecile, — you have a giant and a trumpet-tongued angel before you! Nothing but a streak out of a fifty-dollar lecture. As when, at some unlooked-for moment, the mighty fountain-column (on the Common) springs into the air before the astonished passer-by, — silver-footed, diamond-crowned, rainbow-scarfed — from the bosom of that fair sheet, sacred to the hymns of quiet batrachians at home, and the epigrams of a less amiable and less elevated order of *reptilia* in other latitudes.

Tell me that old Homer did not roll his sightless eyeballs about with delight, as he thundered out these ringing syllables! It seems hard to think of his going around like a hand-organ man, with such music and such thoughts as his to earn his bread with. One can't help wishing that Mr. Pugh could have got him for a single lecture, at least, of the "Star Course," or that he could have appeared in the Music Hall, "for this night only."

The same line of anxious and conscientious effort which I saw not long since on the forehead of one of the sweetest and truest singers who has visited us; the same which is so striking on the masks of singing women painted upon the façade of our great organ, — that Himalayan home of harmony which you are to see and then die, if you don't live where you can see and hear it often. Many deaths have happened in a neighboring large city from that well-

The Beacon Street Side of the Public Garden, in 1857, showing Dr. Holmes and Ralph Waldo Emerson in Conversation

known complaint *Icterus Invidiosorum*, after returning from a visit to the Music Hall.

I don't like your chopped music any way. That woman — she had more sense in her little finger than forty medical societies — Florence Nightingale — says that the music you *pour* out is good for sick folks, and the music you *pound* out is n't.

I have attended a large number of celebrations, commencements, banquets, soirées, and so forth, and done my best to help on a good many of them. In fact, I have become rather too well known in connection with "occasions," and it has cost me no little trouble. I believe there is no kind of occurrence for which I have not been requested to contribute something in prose or verse. It is sometimes very hard to say no to the requests. If one is in the right mood when he or she writes an occasional poem, it seems as if nothing could have been easier. "Why, that piece run off jest like ile. I don't bullieve," the unlettered applicant says to himself,— "I don't bullieve it took him ten minutes to write them verses." The good people have no suspicion of how much a single line, a single expression, may cost its author.

I cannot work many hours consecutively without deranging my whole circulating and caloric system. My feet are apt to get cold, my head hot, my muscles restless, and I feel as if I must get up and exercise in the open air. This is in the morning, and I very rarely allow myself to be detained indoors later than twelve o'clock. After fifteen or twenty minutes' walking I begin to come right, and after two or three times as much as that I can go back to my desk for an hour or two.

A new lecture is just like any other new tool. We use it for a while with pleasure. Then it blisters our hands, and we hate to touch it. By and by our hands get callous, and then we have no longer any sensitiveness about it. But if we give it up, the callouses disappear; and if we meddle with it again, we miss the novelty and get the blisters. The story is often quoted of Whitefield, that he said a sermon was good for nothing until it had been preached forty times. A lecture does n't begin to be old until it has passed its hundredth delivery; and some, I think, have doubled, if not quadrupled, that number. These old lectures are a man's best commonly; they improve by age, also, — like the pipes, fiddles, and poems I told you of the other day. One learns to make the most of their strong points and to carry off their weak ones, — to take out the really good things which don't tell on the audience, and put in cheaper things that do. All this degrades him, of course, but it improves the lecture for general delivery. A thoroughly popular lecture ought to have nothing in it which five hundred people cannot all take in in a flash, just as it is uttered.

I tell you the average intellect of five hundred persons, taken as they come, is not very high. It may be sound and safe, so far as it goes, but it is not very rapid or profound. A lecture ought to be something which all can understand, about something which interests everybody.

[In 1882 Dr. Holmes delivered his farewell address to the Medical School of Harvard University. In the course of his remarks he said:]

There are three occasions upon which a human being has a right to consider himself as a centre of interest to those about him: when he is christened, when he is married, and when he is buried. Every one is the chief personage, the hero of his own baptism, his own wedding, and his own funeral.

There are other occasions, less momentous, in which one may make more of himself than under ordinary circumstances he would think proper to do when he may talk about himself, and tell his own experiences, in fact, indulge in a more or less egotistic monologue without fear of reproach.

I think I may claim that this is one of those occasions. I have delivered my last anatomical lecture and heard my class recite for the last time. They wish to hear from me again in a less scholastic mood than that in which they have known me. . . .

This is the thirty-sixth Course of Lectures in which I have taken my place and performed my duties as Professor of Anatomy. For more than half of my term of office I gave instruction in Physiology, after the fashion of my predecessors and in the manner then generally prevalent in our schools, where the physiological laboratory was not a necessary part of the apparatus of instruction. It was with my hearty approval that the teaching of Physiology was constituted a separate department and made an independent Professorship. Before my time, Dr. Warren had taught Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery in the same course of Lectures, lasting only three or four months. As the boundaries of science are enlarged, new divisions and subdivisions of its territories become necessary. In the place of six Professors in 1847, when I first became a member of the Faculty, I count twelve upon the Catalogue before me, and I find the whole number engaged in the work of instruction in the Medical School amounts to no less than fifty.

Since I began teaching in this school, the aspect of many branches of science has undergone a very remarkable transformation. Chemistry and Physiology are no longer what they were, as taught by the instructors of that time. We are looking forward to the synthesis of new organic compounds; our artificial madder is already in the market, and the indigo-raisers are now fearing that their crop will be supplanted by the manufactured article. In the living body we talk of fuel supplied and work done, in movement, in heat, just as if we were dealing with a machine of our own contrivance. A physiological laboratory of to-day is equipped with instruments of research of such ingenious contrivance, such elaborate construction, that one might suppose himself in a workshop where some exquisite fabric was to be wrought, such as Queens love to wear, and Kings do not always love to pay for. They are indeed weaving a charmed web, for these are the looms from which comes the knowledge that clothes the nakedness of intellect. . . .

I am afraid that it is a good plan to get rid of old Professors, and I am thankful to hear that there is a movement for making provision for those who are left in need when they lose their offices and their salaries. . . . If I myself needed an apology for holding my office so long, I should find it in the fact that human anatomy is much the same study that it was in the days of Vesalius and Fallopius, and that the greater part of my teaching was of such a nature that it could never become antiquated.

Old theories, and old men who cling to them, must take themselves out of the way as the new generation with its fresh thoughts and altered habits of mind comes forward to take the place of that which is dying out. It is always the same story that old men tell to younger ones, some few of whom will in their turn repeat the tale, only with altered names to their children's children.

I am grateful to the roof which has sheltered me, and to the floors which have sustained me, though I have thought it safest always to abstain from anything like eloquence, lest a burst of too emphatic applause might land my class and myself in the cellar of the collapsing structure and bury us in the fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. I have helped to wear these stairs into hollows, — stairs which I trod when they were smooth and level, fresh from the plane. There are just thirty-two of them, as there were five and thirty years ago, but they are steeper and harder to climb, it seems to me, than they were then. . . . I have never been proud of the apartment beneath the seats, in which my preparations for lecture were made. But I chose it because I could have it to myself, and I resign it, with a wish that it were more worthy of regret, into the hands of my successor, with my parting benediction. Within its twilight precincts I have often prayed for light, like Ajax, for the daylight found scanty entrance, and the gaslight never illuminated its dark recesses. May it prove to him who comes after me like the cave of the Sibyl, out of the gloomy depths of which came the oracles which shone with the rays of truth and wisdom.

This temple of learning is not surrounded by the mansions of the great and wealthy. No stately avenues lead up to its façades and portico. I have sometimes felt, when conveying a distinguished stranger through its precincts to its door, that he might question whether star-eyed science had not missed her way when she found herself in this not too attractive locality. I cannot regret that we — you, I should say — are soon to migrate to a more favored region, and carry on your work as teachers and learners in ampler halls and under far more favorable conditions.

I dare not be a coward with my lips
Who dare to question all things in my soul;
Some men may find their wisdom on their knees,
Some prone and grovelling in the dust like slaves;
Let the meek glowworm glisten in the dew;
I ask to lift my taper to the sky
As they who hold their lamps above their heads,
Trusting the larger currents up aloft,

. . . .

My life shall be a challenge, not a truce!
This is my homage to the mighty powers,
To ask my noblest question, undismayed
By muttered threats that some hysteric sense
Of wrong or insult will convulse the throne
Where wisdom reigns supreme; . . .

. . . .

Thou will not hold in scorn the child who dares
Look up to Thee, the Father, — dares to ask
More than thy wisdom answers.

CHAPTER VIII

BOSTON THE BOOKISH

If all the trees in all the woods were men;
And each and every blade of grass a pen;
If every leaf on every shrub and tree
Turned to a sheet of foolscap; every sea
Were changed to ink, and all earth's living tribes
Had nothing else to do but act as scribes,
And for ten thousand ages, day and night,
The human race should write, and write, and write,
Till all the pens and paper were used up,
And the huge inkstand was an empty cup,
Still would the scribblers clustered round its brink
Call for more pens, more paper, and more ink.

CHAPTER VIII

BOSTON THE BOOKISH

[Dr. Holmes worked enthusiastically for the foundation of the Harvard Medical Library, and he lived to see the new Boston Public Library rise upon its site in Copley Square; he delivered a poem upon the occasion of the laying of the corner-stone of the new edifice, in 1888.]

A library like ours must exercise the largest hospitality. A great many books may be found in every large collection which remind us of those apostolic-looking old men who figure on the platform at out political and other assemblages. Some of them have spoken words of wisdom in their day, but they have ceased to be oracles; some of them never had any particularly important message for humanity, but they add dignity to the meeting by their presence; they look wise, whether they are so or not, and no one grudges them their places of honor.

I like books, — I was born and bred among them, and have the easy feeling, when I get into their presence, that a stable boy has among horses. I don't think I undervalue them, either as companions or instructors.

I read few books through. I remember writing on the last page of one that I had successfully mastered, *perlegi*, with the sense that it was a great triumph to have read quite through a volume of such size. But I have always read in books rather than through them, and always with more profit from the books I read in than the books I read through; for when I set out to read through a book, I always felt that I had a task before me, but when I read in a book it was the page or paragraph that I wanted, and which left its impression and became part of my intellectual furniture.

Some day I want to talk about my library. It is such a curious collection of old and new books, such a mosaic of learning and fancies and follies, that a glance over it would interest the company.

I have a picture hanging in my library, a lithograph, of which many of my readers may have seen copies. It represents a grayhaired old book-lover at the top of a long flight of steps. He finds himself in clover, so to speak, among rare old editions, books he has longed to look upon and never seen before, rarities, precious old volumes, *incunabula*, cradle-books, printed while the art was in its infancy, — its glorious infancy, for it was born a giant. The old bookworm is so intoxicated with the sight and handling of the priceless treasures that he cannot bear to put one of the volumes back after he has taken them from the shelf. So there he stands, — one book open in his hands, a volume under each arm, and one or more between his legs, — loaded with as many as he can possibly hold at the same time.

Now, that is just the way in which the extreme form of book-hunger shows itself in the reader whose appetite has become over-developed. He wants to read so many books that he over-crams himself with the crude materials of knowledge, which become knowledge only when the mental digestion has time to assimilate them. I never go into that famous "Corner Bookstore," and look over the new books in the row before me, as I enter the door, without seeing half a dozen which I want to read, or at least know something about.

Well, then, there is no use in gorging one's self with knowledge, and no need of self-reproach because one is content to remain more or less ignorant of many things which interest his fellow-creatures. We gain a good deal of knowledge through the atmosphere; we learn a great deal by accidental hearsay, provided we have the *mordant* in our own consciousness which makes the wise remark, the significant fact, the instructive incident take hold of it. After the stage of despair comes the period of consolation. We soon find that we are not so much worse off than most of our neighbors as we supposed.

One of the encouraging signs of the times is the condensed and abbreviated form in which knowledge is presented to the general reader. The short biographies of historic personages, of which within the past few years many have appeared, have been a great relief to the large class of readers who want to know something, but not too much, about them.

I have some curious books in my library, a few of which I should like to say something about. . . . A library of a few thousand volumes ought always to have some books in it which the owner almost never opens, yet with whose backs he is so well acquainted that he feels as if he knew something of their contents. They are like those persons whom

Park Street from the State-House Grounds

we meet in our daily walks, with whose faces and figures, whose summer and winter garments,—whose walking-sticks and umbrellas even,— we feel acquainted, and yet whose names, whose business, whose residences, we know nothing about. Some of these books are so formidable in their dimensions, so rusty and crabbed in their aspect, that it takes a considerable amount of courage to attack them.

Some books are edifices, to stand as they are built; some are hewn stones, ready to form a part of future edifices; some are quarries, from which stones are to be split for shaping and after use.

I confess that I am not in sympathy with some of the movements that accompany the manifestations of American social and literary independence. . . . So far as concerns literary independence, if we understand by that getting rid of our subjection to British critisicm, such as it was in the days when the question was asked, "Who reads an American book?" we may consider it pretty well established. If it means dispensing with punctuation, coining words at will, self-revelation unrestrained by a sense of what is decorous, declamations in which everything is glorified without being idealized, "poetry" in which the reader must make the rhythms which the poet has not made for him, then I think we had better continue literary colonists. . . . But there is room for everybody and everything in our huge hemisphere. Young America is like a three-year-old colt with his saddle and bridle just taken off. The first thing he wants to do is to *roll*. He is a droll object, sprawling in the grass with his four hoofs in the air; but he likes it, and it won't harm us. So let him roll, — let him roll!

I have always believed in life rather than books. I suppose every day of earth, with its hundred thousand deaths and something more of births, with its loves and hates, its triumphs and defeats, its pangs and blisses, has more of humanity in it than all the books that were ever written or put together. I believe the flowers growing at this moment send up more fragrance to heaven than was ever exhaled from all the essences ever distilled.

Anybody can write "poetry." It is a most unenviable distinction to have published a thin volume of verse, which nobody wanted, nobody buys, nobody reads, nobody cares for except the author, who cries over its pathos, poor fellow, and revels in its beauties, which he has all to himself. Come! who will be my pupils in a Course, — Poetry taught in twelve lessons?

Yes, write, if you want to, there 's nothing like trying;
Who knows what a treasure your casket may hold?
I'll show you that rhyming 's as easy as lying,
If you'll listen to me while the art I unfold.

Here 's a book full of words; one can choose as he fancies,
As a painter his tint, as a workman his tool;
Just think! all the poems and plays and romances
Were drawn out of this, like the fish from a pool!

. . . .

Just so with your verse, — 'tis as easy as sketching, —
You can reel off a song without knitting your brow,
As lightly as Rembrandt a drawing or etching;
It is nothing at all, if you only know how.

Poetry is commonly thought to be the language of emotion. On the contrary, most of what is so called proves the absence of all passionate excitement. It is a cold-blooded, haggard, anxious, worrying hunt after rhymes which can be made serviceable, after images which will be effective, after phrases which are sonorous; all this under limitations which restrict the natural movements of fancy and imagination.

For the last thirty years I have been in the habit of receiving a volume of poems or a poem, printed or manuscript — I will not say daily, though I sometimes receive more than one a day, but at very short intervals. I have been consulted by hundreds of writers of verse as to the merit of their performances, and have often advised the writers to the best of my ability. Of late I have found it impossible to attempt to read critically all the literary productions, in verse and prose, which have heaped themselves on every exposed surface of my library, like snowdrifts along the railroad tracks, — blocking my literary pathway, so that I can hardly find my daily papers.

I have read recently that Mr. Gladstone receives six hundred letters a day. Perhaps he does not receive six hundred letters every day, but if he gets anything like that number daily, what can he do with them? . . .

I do not pretend that I receive six hundred or even sixty letters a day, but I do receive a good many, and have told the public of the fact from time to time, under the pressure of their constantly increasing exactions. As it is extremely onerous, and is soon going to be impossible, for me to keep up the wide range of correspondence which has become a large part of my occupation, and tends to absorb all the vital force which is left me, I wish to enter into a final explanation with the well-meaning but merciless taskmasters who have now for many years been levying their heavy task upon me. I have preserved thousands of their letters, and destroyed a very large number, after answering them. . . .

What struggles of young ambition, finding no place for its energies, or feeling its incapacity to reach the ideal towards which it was striving! What longings of disappointed, defeated fellow-mortals, trying to find a new home for themselves in the heart of one whom they have amiably idealized! And oh, what hopeless efforts of mediocrities and inferiorities, believing in themselves as superiorities, and stumbling on through limping disappointments to prostrate failure! Poverty comes pleading, not for charity, for the most part, but imploring us to find a purchaser for its unmarketable wares. The unreadable author particularly requests us to make a critical examination of his book, and report to him whatever may be our verdict, — as if he wanted anything but our praise, and that very often to be used in his publisher's advertisements.

But what does not one have to submit to who has become the martyr — the Saint Sebastian — of a literary correspondence!

If the time ever comes when to answer all my kind unknown friends, even by dictation, is impossible, or more than I feel equal to, I wish to refer any of those who may feel disappointed at not receiving an answer to the following general acknowledgments: —

1. I am always grateful for any attention which shows me I am kindly remembered.

2. Your pleasant message has been read to me, and has been thankfully listened to.

3. Your book (your essay) (your poem) has reached me safely, and has received all the respectful attention to which it seemed entitled. It would take more than all the time I have at my disposal to read all the printed matter and all the manuscripts which are sent to me, and you would not ask me to attempt the impossible. You will not, therefore, expect me to express a critical opinion of your work.

4. I am deeply sensible of your expressions of personal attachment to me as an author of certain writings which have brought me very near to you, — in virtue of some affinity in our ways of thought and

moods of feeling. Although I cannot keep up the correspondences with many of my readers who seem to be thoroughly congenial with myself, let them be assured that their letters have been read or heard with peculiar gratification, and are preserved as precious treasures.

What a blessed thing it is, that Nature, when she invented, manufactured and patented her authors, contrived to make critics out of the chips that were left! Painful as the task is, they never fail to warn the author, in the most impressive manner, of the probabilities of failure in what he has undertaken. Sad as the necessity is to their delicate sensibilities, they never hesitate to advise him of the decline of his powers, and to press upon him the propriety of retiring before he sinks into imbecility.

No more our foolish passions and affections
  The tragic Muse with mimic grief shall try,
But, nobler far, a course of vivisections
  Teach what it costs a tortured brute to die.

. . . .

Instead of crack-brained poets in their attics
  Filling thin volumes with their flowery talk,
There shall be books of wholesome mathematics;
  The tutor with his blackboard and his chalk.

No longer bards with madrigal and sonnet
Shall woo to moonlight walks the ribboned sex,
But side by side the beaver and the bonnet
Stroll, calmly pondering on some problem's *x*.

The sober bliss of serious calculation
Shall mock the trivial joys that fancy drew,
And, oh, the rapture of a solved equation, —
One selfsame answer on the lips of two!

It seems to me, I said, that the great additions which have been made by realism to the territory of literature consist largely in swampy, malarious, ill-smelling patches of soil which had previously been left to reptiles and vermin. It is perfectly easy to be original by violating the laws of decency and the canons of good taste. The general consent of civilized people was supposed to have banished certain subjects from the conversation of well-bred people and the pages of respectable literature. There is no subject, or hardly any, which may not be treated of at the proper time, in the proper place, by the fitting person, for the right kind of listener or reader. But when the poet or the story-teller invades the province of the man of science, he is on dangerous ground. I need say nothing of the blunders he is pretty sure to make. The imaginative writer is after effects. The scientific man is after truth. Science is decent, modest; does not try to startle, but to instruct. The same scenes and objects which outrage every sense of delicacy in the story-teller's highly colored paragraphs can be read without giving offense in the chaste language of the physiologist or the physician. In this matter of the literal reproduction of sights and scenes which our natural instinct and our better informed taste and judgment teach us to avoid, art has been far in advance of literature.

Who does not remember odious images that can never be washed out from the consciousness which they have stained? . . . Expressions and thoughts of a certain character stain the fibre of the thinking organ, and in some degree affect the hue of every idea that passes through the discolored tissues.

This puerile hunting after details, this cold and cynical inventory of all the wretched conditions in the midst of which poor humanity vegetates, not only do not help us to understand it better, but, on the contrary, the effect on the spectators is a kind of dazzled confusion mingled with fatigue and disgust. . . . Truth is lost in its own excess.

I confess that I am a little jealous of certain tendencies in our own American literature, which led one of the severest and most outspoken of our satirical fellow-countrymen, no longer living to be called to account for it, to say, in a moment of bitterness, that the mission of America was to vulgarize mankind.

Our American atmosphere is vocal with the flippant loquacity of half knowledge. We must accept whatever good can be got out of it, and keep it under as we do sorrel and mullein and witchgrass, by enriching the soil, and sowing good seed in plenty; by good teaching and good books, rather than by wasting our time in talking against it. Half knowledge dreads nothing but whole knowledge.

The difference between green and seasoned knowledge is very great.

What glorifies a town like a cathedral? What dignifies a province like a university? What illumines a country like its scholarship, and what is the nest that hatches scholars but a library?

Thus, then, our library is a temple as truly as the dome-crowned cathedral hallowed by the breath of prayer and praise, where the dead repose and the

The Museum of Fine Arts, Copley Square

living worship. May all its treasures be consecrated like that to the glory of God, through the contributions it shall make to the advancement of sound knowledge . . . and to the common cause in which all good men are working, the furtherance of the well-being of their fellow-creatures!

Proudly, beneath her glittering dome,
  Our three-hilled city greets the morn;
Here Freedom found her virgin home, —
  The Bethlehem where her babe was born.

. . . .

Let in the light! from every age
  Some gleams of garnered wisdom pour,
And, fixed on thought's electric page,
  Wait all their radiance to restore.

. . . .

Let in the light! these windowed walls
  Shall brook no shadowing colonnades,
But day shall flood the silent halls
  Till o'er yon hills the sunset fades.

Behind the ever open gate
  No pikes shall fence a crumbling throne,
No lackeys cringe, no courtiers wait, —
  This palace is the people's own!

. . . .

Here shall the sceptred mistress reign
  Who heeds her meanest subject's call,
Sovereign of all their vast domain,
  The queen, the handmaid of them all!

CHAPTER IX

BOSTON ELMS AND THE LONG PATH

THE elms have robed their slender spray
With full-blown flower and embryo leaf;
Wide o'er the clasping arch of day
Soars like a cloud their hoary chief.

See the proud tulip's flaunting cup,
That flames in glory for an hour, —
Behold it withering, — then look up, —
How meek the forest monarch's flower!

When wake the violets, Winter dies;
When sprout the elm-buds, Spring is near;
When lilacs blossom, Summer cries,
"Bud, little roses! Spring is here!"

CHAPTER IX

BOSTON ELMS AND THE LONG PATH

[Dr. Holmes cherished a lifelong enthusiasm for trees, and while on his lecture tours about the country, he was wont to carry in his pocket a measuring tape, which he stretched about the girth of any especial tree giant that he encountered. During his travels abroad, he delighted to compare the measurements of the great trees in foreign countries with those of his own land, and he was keenly elated when his "home trees" proved winners in the contest of dimension.]

It has always been a favorite idea of mine to bring the life of the Old and the New World face to face by an accurate comparison of their various types of organization. We should begin with man, of course; institute a large and exact comparison between the development of *la pianta umana,* as Alfieri called it, in different sections of each country, in the different callings, at different ages, estimating the height, weight, force by the dynamometer and the spirometer, and finishing off with a series of typical photographs, giving the principal national physiognomies. Then I would follow this up by contrasting the various parallel forms of life in the two continents. . . . The American elm is tall, graceful, slender-sprayed, and drooping as if from languor. The English elm is compact, robust, holds its branches up, and carries its leaves for weeks longer than our own native tree.

Is this typical of the creative force on the two sides of the ocean, or not?

The most interesting comparison I made was between the New England and the Old England elms. It is not necessary to cross the ocean to do this, as we have both varieties growing side by side in our parks, — on Boston Common, for instance. It is wonderful to note how people will lie about big trees. There must be as many as a dozen trees, each of which calls itself the "largest elm in New England." In my younger days, when I never travelled without a measuring tape in my pocket, it amused me to see how meek one of the great swaggering elms would look when it saw the fatal measure begin to unreel itself. It seemed to me that the leaves actually trembled as the inexorable band encircled the trunk in *the smallest place it could find*, which is the only safe rule. The English elm (*Ulmus*

Tremont Street Mall, now called Lafayette Mall, Boston Common

campestris) as we see it in Boston, comes out a little earlier, perhaps, than our own, but the difference is slight. It holds its leaves long after our elms are bare. It grows upward, with abundant dark foliage, while ours spreads, sometimes a hundred and twenty feet, and often droops like a weeping willow. The English elm looks like a much more robust tree than ours, yet they tell me it is very fragile, and that its limbs are constantly breaking off in high winds, just as happens with our native elms. Ours is not a very long-lived tree; between two and three hundred years is, I think, the longest life that can be hoped for it.

There is a hint of a typical difference in the American and the Englishman which I have long recognized in the two elms as compared to each other. It may be fanciful, but I have thought that the correctness and robustness about the English elm, which are replaced by the long tapering limbs and willowy grace and far-spreading reach of our own, might find a certain parallelism in the people, especially the females of the two countries.

I saw no horse-chestnuts equal to those I remember in Salem, and especially to one in Rockport, which is the largest and finest I have ever seen;

no willows like those I pass in my daily drives. . . . No apple-trees I saw in England compare with one next my own door, and there are many others as fine in the neighborhood.

I saw the poet [Tennyson] to the best advantage, under his own trees and walking over his own domain. He took delight in pointing out to me the finest and rarest of his trees, — and there were many beauties among them. I recalled my morning's visit to Whittier at Oak Knoll, in Danvers, a little more than a year ago, when he led me to one of his favorites, an aspiring evergreen which shot up like a flame. I thought of the graceful American elms in front of Longfellow's house, and the sturdy English elms that stand in front of Lowell's. In this garden of England, the Isle of Wight, where everything grows with such a lavish extravagance of greenness that it seems as if it must bankrupt the soil before autumn, I felt as if weary eyes and overtasked brains might reach their happiest haven of rest. . . . We find our most soothing companionship in the trees among which we have lived, some of which we may ourselves have planted. We lean against them, and they never betray our trust;

they shield us from the sun and from the rain; their spring welcome is a new birth, which never loses its freshness; they lay their beautiful robes at our feet in autumn; in winter they "stand and wait," emblems of patience and of truth, for they hide nothing, not even the little leaf-buds which hint to us of hope, the last element in their triple symbolism.

I have owned many beautiful trees, and loved many more outside my own leafy harem. Those who write verses have no special claim to be lovers of trees, but so far as one is of the poetical temperament he is likely to be a tree-lover. Poets have, as a rule, more than the average nervous sensibility and irritability. Trees have no nerves. They live and die without suffering, without self-questioning or self-reproach. They have the divine gift of silence. They cannot obtrude upon the solitary moments when one is to himself the most agreeable of companions.

The poet is a luxury, and if you want him you must pay for him, by not trying to make a drudge of him, while he is all his lifetime struggling with the chills and heats of his artistic intermittent fever.

Say not the Poet dies!
Though in the dust he lies,
He cannot forfeit his melodious breath,
Unsphered by envious death!
Life drops the voiceless myriads from its roll;
Their fate he cannot share,
Who, in the enchanted air
Sweet with the lingering strains that Echo stole,
Has left his dearer self, the music of his soul!

. . . .

Count not our Poet dead!
The stars shall watch his bed,
The rose of June its fragrant life renew
His blushing mound to strew,
And all the tuneful throats of summer swell
With trills as crystal-clear
As when he wooed the ear
Of the young muse that haunts each wooded dell,
With songs of that "rough land" he loved so long and well!

He sleeps; he cannot die!
As evening's long-drawn sigh,
Lifting the rose-leaves on his peaceful mound,
Spreads all their sweets around,
So, laden with his song, the breezes blow
From where the rustling sedge
Frets our rude ocean's edge
To the smooth sea beyond the peaks of snow.
His soul the air enshrines and leaves but dust below!

A walk through the grounds of Magdalen College, under the guidance of the president of that college, showed us some of the fine trees for which I was always looking. One of these, a wych-elm (Scotch elm of some books), was so large that I insisted upon having it measured. A string was procured and carefully carried round the trunk, above the spread of the roots and below that of the branches, so as to give the smallest circumference. I was curious to know how the size of the trunk of this tree would compare with that of the trunks of some of our largest New England elms.

I have measured a good many of these. About sixteen feet is the measurement of a large elm, like that on Boston Common, which all middle-aged people remember. From twenty-two to twenty-three feet is the ordinary maximum of the very largest trees. I never found but one to exceed it: that was the great Springfield elm, which looked as if it might have been formed by the coalescence, from the earliest period of growth, of two young trees. When I measured this in 1837, it was twenty-four feet eight inches in circumference at five feet from the ground; growing larger above and below. I remember this tree well, as we measured the string that was to tell the size of its English rival. As we came near the end of the string, I felt as I did when

I was looking at the last dash of Ormonde and the Bard of Epsom. — Twenty feet, and a long piece of string left. — Twenty-one. — Twenty-two. — Twenty-three. — An extra heart-beat or two. — Twenty-four! Twenty-five and six inches over!! The Springfield elm may have grown a foot or more since I measured it, fifty years ago, but the tree at Magdalen stands ahead of all my old measurements. Many of the fine old trees, this in particular, may have been known in their younger days to Addison, whose favorite walk is still pointed out to the visitor.

I never saw more than two or three good photographs of American elms. The best is a large one of the "Johnson Elm" about three miles from Providence, one of the finest trees, as it was when I used to visit it in New England. This was sent me, framed by my nephew Dr. Parsons, of Providence, who may be in possession of the negative. . . . I have stereographs of the Boston Elm, before its present condition of decadence, and one of the Washington Elm, the last a fair specimen of the tree, but neither of them equal to the great Johnson Elm.

I have brought down a slice of hemlock to show you. Tree blew down in my woods (that were) in 1852. Twelve feet and a half round, fair girth; nine feet where I got my section, higher up. This is a wedge, going to the centre, of the general shape of a slice of apple-pie in a large and not opulent family. Length about eighteen inches. I have studied the growth of this tree by its rings, and it is curious. Three hundred and forty-two rings. Started, therefore, about 1510. The thickness of the rings tells the rate at which it grew. Look here. Here are some human lives laid down against the periods of its growth, to which they corresponded. This is Shakespeare's. The tree was seven inches in diameter when he was born; ten inches when he died. A little less than ten inches when Milton was born; seventeen when he died. Then comes a long interval, and this thread marks out Johnson's life, during which the tree increased from twenty-two to twenty-nine inches in diameter. Here is the span of Napoleon's career, — the tree does n't seem to have minded it.

I never saw the man who was not startled at looking on this section, — I have seen many wooden preachers, — never one like this. How much more striking would be the calendar counted on the rings of one of these awful trees which were standing when Christ was on earth, and where that brief mortal life is chronicled with the stolid apathy of vegetable being, which remembers all human history as a thing of yesterday in its own dateless existance!

What makes a first-class elm? — Why size, in the first place, and chiefly. Anything over twenty feet of clear girth, five feet above the ground, and with a spread of branches a hundred feet across, may claim that title, according to my scale.

Elms of the second-class, generally ranging from fourteen to eighteen feet, are comparatively common. The queen of them all is that glorious tree near one of the churches in Springfield. Beautiful and stately she is beyond all praise. The "great tree" on Boston Common comes in the second rank, as does the one at Cohasset, which used to have, and probably has still a head as round as an apple, and near them one at Newburyport, with scores of others which might be mentioned.

Eternal Truth! beyond our hopes and fears
Sweep the vast orbits of thy myriad spheres!

BOSTON ELMS

From age to age, while History carves sublime
On her waste rock the flaming curves of time,
How the wild swayings of our planet show
That worlds unseen surround the world we know.

There was no place so favorable as the Common for the study of the heavens. The skies were brilliant with stars, and the air was just keen enough to remind our young friend that the cold season was at hand. They wandered round for a while, and at last found themselves under the Great Elm, drawn hither, no doubt, by the magnetism it is so well known to exert over the natives of its own soil and those who have often been under the shadow of its outstretched arms.

The venerable survivor of its contemporaries that flourished in the days when Blackstone rode beneath it on his bull, was now a good deal broken by age, yet not without marks of lusty vitality. It has been wrenched and twisted and battered by so many scores of winters that some of its limbs were crippled and many of its joints were shaky, and but for the support of the iron braces that lent their strong sinews to its more infirm members it would have gone to pieces in the first strenuous northeaster or the first sudden and violent gale from the southwest. But there it stood . . . though its obituary was long ago written after one of the terrible storms that tore its branches, — leafing out hopefully in April as if it were trying in its dumb language to lisp "Our Father," and dropping its slender burden of foliage in October as softly as if it were whispering Amen!

Not far from the ancient and monumental tree lay a small sheet of water, once agile with life and vocal with evening melodies, but now stirred only by the swallow as he dips his wing, or by the morning bath of the English sparrows, those high-headed, thick-bodied, full-feeding, hot-tempered little John Bulls that keep up such a swashing and swabbing and spattering round all the water basins, one might think from the fuss they make about it that a bird never took a bath here before, and that they were the missionaries of ablution to the unwashed Western world.

There are those who speak lightly of this small aqueous expanse, the eye of the sacred enclosure, which has looked unwinking on the happy faces of so many natives and the curious features of so many strangers. The music of its twilight minstrels has long ceased, but their memory lingers like an

The Old Elm, Boston Common

echo in the name it bears. Cherish it, inhabitants of the two-hilled city, once three-hilled; ye who have said to the mountain "Remove hence," and turned the sea into dry land! May no contractor fill his pockets by undertaking to fill thee, thou granite-girdled lakelet, or drain the civic purse by drawing off thy waters! For art thou not the Palladium of our Troy? Didst thou not, like the Divine image which was the safeguard of Ilium, fall from the skies, and if the Trojan could look with pride upon the heaven-descended form of the Goddess of Wisdom, cannot he who dwells by thy shining oval look in that mirror and contemplate Himself, — the Native of Boston?

Will you walk out and look at those elms with me after breakfast? — I said to the schoolmistress.

We walked under Mr. Paddock's row of English elms. The gray squirrels were looking for their breakfasts, and one of them came towards us in light, soft, intermittent leaps, until he was close to the rail of the burial-ground. He was on a grave with a broad blue-slatestone at its head, and a shrub growing on it. The stone said this was the grave of a young man who was the son of an Honorable gentleman, who died a hundred years ago and more. Oh, yes, *died,* — with a small triangular mark on one breast, and another smaller opposite, in his back, where another young man's rapier had slid through his body; and so he lay out there on the Common, and was found cold the next morning, with the night-dews and the death-dews mingled on his forehead.

Let us have a look at poor Benjamin's grave, — said I. — His bones lie where his body was laid so long ago, and where the stone says they lie, — which is more than can be said of most of the tenants of this and several other burial-grounds.

The most accursed act of Vandalism ever committed within my knowledge was the uprooting of the ancient gravestones in three at least of our city burial-grounds, and one at least just outside the city, and planting them in rows to suit the taste for symmetry of the perpetrators. Many years ago, when this disgraceful process was going on under my eyes, I addressed an indignant remonstrance to a leading journal. I suppose it was deficient in literary elegance, or too warm in its language; for no notice was taken of it, and the hyena horror was allowed to complete itself in the face of daylight. I have never got over it.

The Tremont House, 1886

The bones of my own ancestors, being entombed, lie beneath their own tablet; but the upright stones have been shuffled about like chessmen, and nothing short of the Day of Judgment will tell whose dust lies beneath any of those records, meant by affection to mark one small spot as sacred to some cherished memory. Shame! Shame! Shame! that is all I can say. It was on public thoroughfares, under the eye of authority, that this infamy was enacted. The red Indians would have known better; the selectmen of an African kraal-village would have had more respect for their ancestors. I should like to see the gravestones which have been disturbed all removed, and the ground levelled, leaving the flat tombstones; epitaphs were never famous for truth, but the old reproach of "Here lies" never had such a wholesale illustration as in these outraged burial-places, where the stone does lie above and the bones do not lie beneath.

Stop before we turn away, and breathe a woman's sigh over poor Benjamin's dust. Love killed him I think. Twenty years old, and there fighting another young fellow on the Common in the cool of that old July evening; yes, there must have been love at the bottom of it.

The schoolmistress dropped a rosebud she had in her hand, through the rails, upon the grave of Benjamin Woodbridge.

We came opposite the head of a place or court running eastward from the main street. — Look down there, — I said, — My friend, the Professor, lived in that house at the left hand for years and years. He died out of it, the other day. — Died? — said the schoolmistress. — Certainly, — said I. We die out of houses, just as we die out of our bodies. A commercial smash kills a hundred men's houses for them, as a railroad crash kills their mortal frames and drives out the immortal tenants. Men sicken of houses until at last they quit them, as the soul leaves its body when it is tired of its infirmities. The body has been called "the house we live in"; the house is quite as much the body we live in.

The schoolmistress and I had pleasant walks and long talks. . . .

My idea was, in the first place, to search out the picturesque spots which the city affords a sight of, to those who have eyes. I know a good many and it was a pleasure to look at them in company with my young friend. There were the shrubs and flowers in the Franklin-Place front-yards or borders: Com-

The Long Path, Boston Common

merce is just putting his granite foot upon them. Then there are certain small seraglio-gardens, into which one can get a peep through the crevices of high fences, — one in Myrtle Street, or at the back of it, — here and there one at the North and South Ends. Then the great elms in Essex Street. Then the stately horsechestnuts in that vacant lot in Chambers Street, which hold their outspread hand over your head (as I said in my poem the other day), and look as if they were whispering, "May grace, mercy, and peace be with you!" — and the rest of the benediction. Nay, there are certain patches of ground, which, having lain neglected for a time, Nature, who always has her pockets full of seeds, and holes in her pockets, has covered with hungry plebeian growths, which fight for life with each other, until some of them get broad-leaved and succulent, and you have a coarse vegetable tapestry which Raphael would have disdained to spread over the foreground of his masterpiece. The Professor pretends that he found such a one on Charles Street, which, in its dare-devil impudence of rough-and-tumble vegetation, beat the pretty-behaved flower-beds of the Public Garden as ignominiously as a group of young tatterdemalions playing pitch-andtoss beats a row of Sunday-school-boys with their teacher at their head.

It was on the Common that we were walking. The mall, or boulevard of our Common, you know, has various branches leading from it in different directions. One of these runs down opposite Joy Street southward across the whole length of the Common to Boylston Street. We called it the long path, and were fond of it.

I felt very weak, indeed (though of a tolerably robust habit), as we came opposite the head of this path on that morning. I think I tried to speak twice without making myself distinctly audible. At last I got out the question, — Will you take the long path with me? — Certainly, — said the schoolmistress, — with much pleasure. — Think, — I said, before you answer: if you take the long path with me now, I shall interpret it that we are to part no more! The schoolmistress stepped back with a sudden movement, as if an arrow had struck her.

One of the long granite blocks used as seats was hard by, the one you may still see close by the Gingko-tree. —Pray, sit down,—I said.—No, no, she answered softly, — I will walk the *long path* with you!

CHAPTER X

FAREWELL, BOSTON

I come not here your morning hour to sadden,
A limping pilgrim, leaning on his staff, —
I, who have never deemed it sin to gladden
This vale of sorrows with a wholesome laugh.

If words of mine another's gloom has brightened,
Through my dumb lips the heaven-sent message came:
If hand of mine another's task has lightened,
It felt the guidance that it dares not claim.

. . . .

Time claims his tribute; silence now is golden;
Let me not vex the too long suffering lyre;
Though to your love untiring still beholden,
The curfew tells me — cover up the fire.
And now with grateful smile and accents cheerful,
And warmer heart than look or word can tell,
In simplest phrase — these traitorous eyes are tearful —
Thanks, Brothers, Sisters, — Children, — and farewell.

CHAPTER X

FAREWELL, BOSTON

[THE Doctor glided gently and peacefully into the period of old age. He had worked hard but had never been forced to over-work; he had been free from any overwhelming anxieties; he had always enjoyed a comfortable amount of worldly goods, and had been ever surrounded by congenial friends and agreeable family ties. In the words of his biographer:

"He had strolled pleasantly and at his own pace along the side paths, by the enchanting hedgerows, quite apart from the hurly-burly of the highway where the throng hurried and jostled along, the millionaires and the beggars crowding, hustling, and cursing each other. Thus leaving this procession, which could find no leisure for enjoyment, to push and tumble along as best it might, he meantime advanced pleasantly falling in now and then with good company, moving through the changing shade, or sunshine, enjoying all the possible beauty and peacefulness of the journey through life. In this way he became old, and hardly knew it — would have forgotten it for a long while, perhaps, had he been a less close observer of facts, or if others had not called his attention to the climbing figures of the anniversaries."]

I MUST not forget that a new generation of readers has come into being since I have been writing for the public, and that a new generation of aspiring and brilliant authors has grown into general recognition. The dome of Boston State House, which is the centre of my little universe was glittering in its fresh golden pellicle before I had reached the scriptural boundary of life. It has lost its lustre now, and the years which have dulled its surface have whitened the dome of that fragile structure in which my consciousness holds the session of its faculties. Time is not to be cheated.

Look here! There are crowds of people whirled through our streets on these new-fashioned cars, with their witch-broomsticks overhead, — if they don't come from Salem, they ought to, — and not more than one in a dozen of these fish-eyed bipeds thinks or cares a nickel's worth about the miracle which is wrought for their convenience. . . . What do they know or care about this last revelation of the omnipresent spirit of the material universe? We ought to go down on our knees when one of these mighty caravans, car after car, spins by us, under the mystic impulse which seems to know not whether its train is loaded or empty. . . . I am thankful that in an age of cynicism I have not lost my reverence.

Perhaps you would wonder to see how some very common sights impress me. . . . And now, before this new manifestation of that form of cosmic vitality which we call electricity, I feel like taking the posture of the peasants listening to the Angelus.

All reflecting persons must recognize, in looking back over a long life, how largely their creeds, their course of life, their wisdom and unwisdom, their whole characters, were shaped by the conditions which surrounded them. Little children they came from the hands of the Father of all; little children in their helplessness, their ignorance, they are going back to him. They cannot help feeling that they are to be transferred from the rude embrace of the boisterous elements to arms that will receive them tenderly. Poor planetary foundlings, they have known hard treatment at the hands of the brute forces of nature, from the control of which they are soon to be set free.

I see no corner of the universe which the Father has wholly deserted. The forces of Nature bruise and wound our bodies, but an artery no sooner bleeds than the Divine hand is placed upon it to stay the flow. A wound is no sooner made than the healing process is set on foot. Pain reaches a certain point and insensibility comes on, — for fainting is the natural anodyne of curable briefs, as death is the remedy of those which are intolerable.

I am satisfied, that, as we grow older, we learn to look upon our bodies more and more as a temporary possession and less and less as identified with ourselves. In early years, while the child "feels its life in every limb," it lives in the body and for the body to a very great extent. It ought to be so.

I am living as agreeably as possible under my conditions. . . . But in the mean time my sight grows dimmer, my hearing grows harder, and I don't doubt my mind grows duller. But you remember what Landor said: that he was losing his mind, but he did n't mind that, — he was losing or had lost his teeth — that was his chief affliction. Between nature and art I get on very well in the dental way, — as for the mental, I will not answer.

Don't you stay at home of evenings? Don't you love a cushioned seat
In a corner, by the fireside, with your slippers on your feet?

The Gardiner Greene House, Pemberton Square

Don't you wear warm, fleecy flannels? Don't you muffle up
your throat?
Don't you like to have one help you when you 're putting on
your coat?

Don't you like old books you've dog's-eared, you can't remember when?
Don't you call it late at nine o'clock and go to bed at ten?
How many cronies can you count of all you used to know
Who called you by your christian name some fifty years ago?

An old tree can put forth a leaf as green as that of a young one, and looks at it with a pleasant sort of surprise, I suppose, as I do at my saucily juvenile productions.

I think I do not feel any considerable change in my general condition, — my sight grows dimmer, of course, — but very slowly. I have worn the same glasses for twenty years. I am getting somewhat hard of hearing, — "slightly deaf," the newspapers inform me, with that polite attention to a personal infirmity which is characteristic of the newspaper press. The dismantling of the human organism is a gentle process, more obvious to those who look on than to those who are the subjects of it. It brings some solaces with it: deafness is a shield; incapacity unloads our shoulders; and imbecility, if it must come, is always preceded by the administration of one of Nature's opiates. It is a good deal that we older writers, whose names are often mentioned together, should have passed the Psalmist's limit of active life, and yet have an audience when we speak or sing.

I wish you all the blessings you have asked for me — how much better you deserve them!

There is all the difference in the world in the mental as in the bodily constitution of different individuals. Some must "take in sail" sooner, some later. We can get a useful lesson from the American and English elms on our Common. The American elms are quite bare, and have been so for weeks. They know very well that they are going to have storms to wrestle with; they have not forgotten the gales of September and the tempests of the late autumn and early winter. It is a hard fight they are going to have, and they strip their coats off and roll up their shirt-sleeves, and show themselves bare-armed and ready for the contest. The English elms are of a more robust build, and stand defiant, with all their summer clothing about their sturdy frames. They may yet have to learn a lesson from their American cousins, for notwithstanding their compact and solid structure they go to pieces in the great winds just as ours do. We must drop much of our foliage before winter is upon us. We must take in sail and throw over cargo, if necessary, to keep us afloat.

There are no times like the old times, — they shall never be forgot!
There is no place like the old place, — keep green the dear old spot!
There are no friends like our old friends, — may Heaven prolong their lives!
There are no loves like our old loves, — God bless our loving wives!

At fifty, your vessel is staunch, and you are on deck with the rest, in all weathers. At sixty, the vessel still floats, and you are in the cabin. At seventy, you, with a few fellow-passengers, are on a raft. At eighty, you are on a spar, to which, possibly, one, or two, or three friends of about your own age are still clinging. After that, you must expect soon to find yourself alone, if you are still floating, with only a life-preserver to keep your old white-bearded chin above water.

My friends — contemporary ones — are all gone pretty much. James Clarke was the one I miss most. William Amory I saw a good deal of in these last years. Asa Gray I liked exceedingly, though I did not see him very often. Herman Inches I go to see pretty often, but he is gradually wearing out, after outliving almost everybody who expected to go to his funeral.

You make fun of our Class meeting [1889]. It was not very exhilarating, but we got through it pretty well. Two who were there last year were missing. . . . There were six of us. . . Stickney and Smith were both stone deaf, and kept up some kind of telephony with each other. I read them a poem in which were two lines that I can remember: "So ends 'The Boys' a lifelong play;" and "Farewell! I let the curtain fall." The drama was really carried out very well. All kinds of characters were represented, and we appeared on the stage in larger numbers for a longer time than any class of our generation. . . .

How strange it is to see the sons of our contemporaries getting gray, and their grandchildren getting engaged and married. I take the *labuntur anni* without many *eheus*. The truth is, Nature has her anodynes, and Old Age carries one of them in his pocket. It is some kind of narcotic; it dulls our sensibility; it tends to make us sleepy and indifferent; and, in lightening our responsibilities (which President Walker spoke of as one of our chief blessings), rids us of many of our worries. I don't think *you* grow old, and in many ways I do not feel as if I did. But sight and hearing won't listen to any nonsense.

The class of 1829 at Harvard College, of which I am a member, graduated, according to the triennial, fifty-nine in number. It is sixty years, then, since that time; and as they were, on an average, about twenty years old, those who survive must have reached fourscore years. Of the fifty-nine graduates ten only are living, or were at the last accounts; one in six very nearly. In the first ten years after graduation, our third decade, when we were between twenty and thirty years old, we lost three members, — about one in twenty; between the ages of thirty and forty, eight died, — one in seven of those the decade began with; from forty to fifty, only two, — or one in twenty-four; from fifty to sixty, eight, — or one in six; from sixty to seventy, fifteen, — or two out of every five; from seventy to eighty, twelve, — or one in two. The greatly increased mortality which began with the seventh decade went on steadily increasing. At sixty we come "within range of the rifle-pits," to borrow an expression from my friend Weir Mitchell.

At the last annual dinner every effort was made to bring all the survivors of the class together. Six of the ten living members were there, — six old men in place of the thirty or forty classmates who surrounded the long, oval table in 1859, when I asked, "Has any old fellow got mixed with the boys?" — "boys" whose tongues were as the vibrating leaves of the forest; whose talk was like the voice of many waters; whose laugh was as the breaking of mighty waves upon the seashore. Among the six at our late dinner was our first scholar, and the thorough-bred and accomplished engineer who held the city of Lawrence in his brain before it spread itself out along the banks of the Merrimac. There, too, was the poet whose National Hymn, "My Country, 't is of thee," is known to more millions, and dearer to many of them, than all the other songs written since the Psalms of David. Four of our six were clergymen; the engineer and the present writer completed the list. Were we melancholy? Did we talk of graveyards and epitaphs? No, — we remembered our dead tenderly, serenely, feeling deeply what we had lost in those who but a little while ago were with us. . . . We were not the moping, complaining graybeards that many might suppose we must have been. We had been favored with the blessing of long life. We had seen the drama well into its fifth act. The sun still warmed us, the air was still grateful and life-giving.

Well, let the present do its best,
We trust our Maker for the rest,
As on our way we plod;
Our souls, full dressed in fleshly suits,
Love air and sunshine, flowers and fruits,
The daisies better than their roots
Beneath the grassy sod.

Not bed-time yet! The full-blown flower
Of all the year — this evening hour —
With friendship's flame is bright;
Life is still sweet, the heavens are fair,
Though fields are brown and woods are bare,
And many a joy is left to share
Before we say Good-night!

I have sometimes thought that I loved so well the accidents of this temporary terrestrial residence, its endeared localities, its precious affections, its pleasing variety of occupation, its alternations of excited and gratified curiosity, and whatever else comes nearest to the longings of the natural man, that I might be wickedly homesick in a far-off spiritual realm where such toys are done with.

In whatever world I may find myself, I hope I shall always love our poor little spheroid, so long my home, which some kind angel may point out to me as a gilded globule swimming in the sunlight far away. After walking the streets of pure gold in the New Jerusalem, might not one like a short vacation, to visit the well-remembered green fields and flowery meadows?

[Throughout his life Dr. Holmes was fond of church-going, and he was a regular attendant at the services in King's Chapel.]

I am a regular church-goer. I should go for various reasons, if I did not love it; but I am happy enough to find great pleasure in the midst of devout multitudes, whether I can accept all their creeds or not. One place of worship comes nearer than the rest to my ideal standard, and to this it was that I carried our young girl. . . .

My natural Sunday home is King's Chapel, where a good and amiable and acceptable preacher tries to make us better, with a purity and sincerity which we admire and love. In that church I have worshipped for half a century, — there I listened to Dr. Greenwood, to Ephraim Peabody, often to James Walker, and to other holy and wise men who have

King's Chapel, 1860

served from time to time. There on the fifteenth of June 1840, I was married, there my children were all christened, from that church the dear companion of so many blessed years was buried. In her seat I must sit, and through its door I hope to be carried to my resting-place.

Is it a weanling's weakness for the past
  That in the stormy, rebel-breeding town,
Swept clean of relics by the levelling blast,
Still keeps our gray old chapel's name of "King's,"
Still to its outworn symbols fondly clings, —
  Its unchurched mitres and its empty crown?

. . . .

All vanished! It were idle to complain
  That ere the fruits shall come the flowers must fall;
Yet somewhat we have lost amidst our gain,
Some rare ideals time may not restore, —
The charm of courtly breeding, seen no more,
  And reverence, dearest ornament of all.

The middle-aged and young men have left comparatively faint impressions in my memory, but how grandly the procession of the old clergymen who filled our pulpit from time to time, and passed the day under our roof, marches before my closed eyes.

The pulpit used to lay down the law to the pews; at the present time, it is of more consequence what the pews think than what the minister does, for the obvious reason that the pews can change their minister, and often do, whereas the minister cannot change the pews, or can do so only to a very limited extent. The preacher's garment is cut according to the pattern of his hearers, for the most part.

It is natural enough to cling to life. We are used to atmospheric existence, and can hardly conceive of ourselves except as breathing creatures. We have never tried any other mode of being, or, if we have, we have forgotten all about it, whatever Wordsworth's grand ode may tell us we may remember. Heaven itself must be an experiment to every human soul which shall find itself there. It may take time for an earth-born saint to become acclimated to the celestial ether, — that is, if time can be said to exist for a disembodied spirit. We are all sentenced to capital punishment for the crime of living, and though the condemned cell of our earthly existence is but a narrow and bare dwelling-place, we have adjusted ourselves to it, and made it tolerably comfortable for the little while we are to be confined in it. The prisoner of Chillon

> "regained [his] freedom with a sigh," —

and a tender-hearted mortal might be pardoned for looking back, like the poor lady who was driven from her dwelling-place by fire and brimstone, at the home he was leaving for the "undiscovered country."

The mysteries of our lives and ourselves resolve themselves very slowly with the progress of years. Every decade lifts the curtain, which hides us from ourselves, a little further, and lets a new light upon what was dark and unintelligible.

How few things there are that do not change their whole aspect in the course of a single generation! The landscape around us is wholly different. Even the outlines of the hills that surround us are changed by the creeping of the villages with their spires and school-houses up their sides. The sky remains the same, and the ocean. A few old churchyards look very much as they used to, except, of course in Boston, where the gravestones have been rooted up and planted in rows with walks between them, to the utter disgrace and ruin of our most venerated cemetaries. The Registry of Deeds and the Probate Office show us the same old folios, where we can read our grandfather's title to his estate (if we had a grandfather and he happened to own anything) and see how many pots and kettles there were in his kitchen by the inventory of his personal property. . . . The graveyard and the stage are pretty much the only places where you can expect to find your friends as you left them five and twenty or fifty years ago.

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
  In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
  On the tomb.

. . . . . .

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
  In the spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
  Where I cling.

This is the season for old churchyards. . . . The Boston ones have been ruined by uprooting and transplanting the gravestones. But the old Cambridge burial-ground is still inviolate; as are the one in the edge of Watertown, beyond Mount Auburn, and the most interesting in some respects of all, that at Dorchester, where they show great stones laid on the early graves to keep the wolves from acting like hyenas. I make a pilgrimage to it from time to time to see that little Submit sleeps in peace, and read the tender lines that soothed the heart of the Pilgrim mother two hundred years ago and more:

> "Submit submitted to her heavenly king
> Being a flower of that aeternal spring,
> Near 3 yeares old she dyed in heaven to waite
> The yeare was sixteen hundred 48."

Mount Auburn wants a century to hallow it, but is beginning to soften with time a little. Many of us remember it as yet unbroken by the spade, before Miss Hannah Adams went and lay down there under the turf, *alone*, — "first tenant of Mount Auburn." The thunder-storms do not frighten the poor little woman now as they used to in those early days when I remember her among the living. There are many names of those whom we have loved and honored on the marbles of that fair cemetery.

Perhaps you sometimes wander in through the iron gates of the Copp's Hill burial-ground. You love to stroll round among the graves that crowd each other in the thickly peopled soil of that breezy summit. You love to lean on the freestone slab which lies over the bones of the Mathers, — to read the epitaph of stout William Clark, "Despiser of Sorry Persons and little Actions," to stand by the stone grave of sturdy Daniel Malcolm and look upon the old splintered slab that tells the old rebel's story, — to kneel by the triple stone that says how the three Worthylakes, father, mother, and young daughter, died on the same day and lie buried there; a mystery; the subject of a moving ballad, by the late Benjamin Franklin, — as may be seen in his autobiography, which will explain the secret of the triple gravestone; though the old philosopher has made a mistake, unless the stone is wrong.

The Little Gentleman lies where he longed to lie, among the old names and the old bones of the old Boston people. At the foot of his resting-place is the river, alive with the wings and antennæ of its colossal water-insects; over opposite are the great war-ships, and the heavy guns, which, when they roar, shake the soil in which he lies; and in the steeple of Christ Church, hard by, are the sweet chimes which are the Boston boy's Ranz des Vaches, whose echoes follow him all the world over.

The Old North Church, Salem Street

How old was I, . . . I the recipient of all these favors and honors? I had cleared the eight barred gate, which few come in sight of, and fewer, far fewer, go over, a year before. I was a trespasser on the domain belonging to another generation. . . . After that leap over the tall barrier, it looks like a kind of impropriety to keep on as if one were still of a reasonable age. Sometimes it seems to me almost of the nature of a misdemeanor to be wandering about in the preserve which the fleshless gatekeeper guards so jealously.

[Dr. Holmes was able to take his usual walks until within a few days of his death. He had failed gently and almost imperceptibly and seemingly in accordance with his own word-pictures of Nature's gradual relinquishment of her physical possessions. He was up and about the house on the last day, passing away peacefully in his chair on Oct. 7, 1894. Two days later he was buried from King's Chapel. In his last letters to Whittier, Dr. Holmes sets forth his cheerful and hopeful view of old age, and affectionately clasps hands with the dear friend in whose company he is "nearing the snow-line":]

MY DEAR WHITTIER, — Here I am at your side among the octogenarians. At seventy we are objects of veneration, at eighty of curiosity, at ninety of wonder; and if we reach a hundred we are candidates for a side-show attached to Barnum's great exhibition. . . .

Old age at best is lonely, and the process of changing one's whole suit of friends and acquaintances has its moments when one feels naked and shivers.

I have this forenoon answered a letter from the grandson of a classmate and received a visit from the daughter of another classmate, the "Sweet Singer" of the class of '29. So you see I have been contemplating the leafless boughs and the brown turf in the garden of my memory.

Not less do I prize my newer friendships.

. . . .

I hope dear Whittier, that you find much to enjoy in the midst of all the lesser trials which old age must bring with it. You have kind friends all around you, and the love and homage of your fellow-countrymen as few have enjoyed them, with the deep satisfaction of knowing that you have earned them, not merely by the gifts of your genius, but by the noble life which has ripened without a flaw into a grand and serene old age. I never see my name coupled with yours, as it often is nowadays, without feeling honored by finding myself in such company, and wishing that I were more worthy of it.

[The Doctor's final words of appreciation offered to his friend Whittier may well be re-echoed on his own behalf, for they were as applicable to the one who uttered them, as to him to whom they were addressed by the fellow-octogenarian.]

I congratulate you upon having climbed another glacier and crossed another crevasse in your ascent of the white summit which already begins to see the morning twilight of the coming century. A life so well filled as yours has been cannot be too long for your fellow-men. In their affections you are secure, whether you are with them here, or near them in some higher life than theirs. I hope your years have not become a burden, so that you are tired of living. At our age we must live chiefly in the past: happy is he who has a past like yours to look back upon. . . . We are lonely, very lonely, in these last years. The image which I have used before this in writing to you recurs once more to my thought. We were on deck together as we began the voyage of life two generations ago . . . the craft which held us began going to pieces, until a few of us were left on the raft pieced together of its fragments. And now the raft has at last parted and you and I are left clinging to the solitary spar, which is all that still remains afloat of the sunken vessel. . . . Long may it be before you leave a world where your influence has been so beneficent, where your example has been such an inspiration, where you are so truly loved, and where your presence is a perpetual benediction.

If the time comes when you must lay down the fiddle and the bow, because your fingers are too stiff, and drop the ten-foot sculls because your arms are too weak, and, after dallying a while with eyeglasses, come at last to the undisguised reality of spectacles, if the time comes when the fire of life we spoke of has burned so low that where the flames reverberated there is only the sombre stain of regret, and where its coals glowed, only the white ashes that cover the embers of memory, — don't let your heart grow cold, and you may carry cheerfulness and love with you into the teens of your second century, if you can last so long.

Dear faithful reader, whose patient eyes have followed my reports through these long months, you and I are about to part company.

FAREWELL, BOSTON

The Play is over. While the light
  Yet lingers in the darkening hall,
I come to say a last Good-night
  Before the final *Exeunt all.*

We gathered once, a joyous throng:
  The jovial toasts went gayly round;
With jest, and laugh, and shout, and song,
  We made the floors and walls resound.

We come with feeble steps and slow,
  A little band of four or five,
Left from the wrecks of long ago,
  Still pleased to find ourselves alive.

. . . .

Why mourn that we, the favored few
  Whom grasping Time so long has spared
Life's sweet illusions to pursue,
  The common lot of age have shared?

In every pulse of Friendship's heart
  There breeds unfelt a throb of pain, —
One hour must rend its links apart,
  Though years on years have forged the chain.

So ends "The Boys," — a lifelong play.
  We too must hear the Prompter's call
To fairer scenes and brighter day:
  Farewell! I let the curtain fall.

The curtain has now fallen, and I show myself a moment before it to thank my audience and say farewell. . . . I hope I have not wholly disappointed those who have been so kind to my predecessors.

To you, Beloved, who have never failed to cut the leaves which hold my record, who have never nodded over its pages, who have never hesitated in your allegiance, who have greeted me with unfailing smiles and part from me with unfeigned regrets, to you I look my last adieu as I bow myself out of sight, trusting my poor efforts to your always kind remembrance.

Slow toiling upward from the misty vale,
  I leave the bright enamelled zones below;
  No more for me their beauteous bloom shall glow,
Their lingering sweetness load the morning gale;
Few are the slender flowerets, scentless, pale,
  That on their ice-clad stems all trembling blow
  Along the margin of unmelting snow;
Yet with unsaddened voice thy verge I hail,
  White realm of peace above the flowering line;
Welcome thy frozen domes, thy rocky spires!
  O'er thee undimmed the moon-girt planets shine,
On thy majestic altars fade the fires
That filled the air with smoke of vain desires,
  And all the unclouded blue of heaven is thine!

THE END

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